



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America



*Prince of Peace
Lutheran Church*



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Dear friends in Christ,

All around us, we see signs of God's love and goodness. A person who has stepped away from church for many years steps back into a congregation, feeling the call of the Holy Spirit. Young adults feeling isolated in a digital-first world start gathering in person in a small group, enjoying the warmth of a hug and a new friend asking about their week. A mother plants a garden, and it yields fruits and vegetables, giving her nutritious food for her kids and extra produce to sell at the local market. Everywhere we look, we see signs of Christ's love. In Psalm 93, we read: "More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord! Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore" (4-5).


God's love is a majestic thing, and it moves us to share it in word and deed. The ministries of our congregations, our synods and the ELCA churchwide organization are all working together to share God's love with people in our neighborhoods, across our country and around the world.

I am so grateful for you, dear church. Your generosity to each of these three expressions of the church — your congregation, your synod and the churchwide organization — has bolstered the church's ability to share the message of God's love to people who are longing for it. Through your

“More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord! Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore.”

—Psalm 93:4-5

financial resources, your time volunteering and accompanying others, and your voices, you've helped carry this message of God's majestic love. Thank you, dear church. As we look ahead to the coming year, I encourage you to stand steadfast in God's promises, sure of God's love and goodness.



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

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**Annual Meeting of the Congregation
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Sunday January 26, 2025
11:00 a.m.**

Agenda

Call to Order	Joan New, Council President
Opening Prayer	Pastor Froehlke
Approval of Minutes 2024 Annual Meeting	Joan New
Elections	2024 Nominating Team
Council Members	
Nominating Team for 2025	
Pastor's Remarks	Pastor Froehlke
Director of the House Next Door Remarks	Pastor Selover
Minister of Music Remarks	Dr. Doug Helvering
Reports of the Ministry Teams	Joan New
Approval of 2024 (Spending Plan)	Joan New
Thank You	Joan New
Lord's Prayer and Dismissal	Pastor Froehlke

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes
January 28, 2024

Opening

After it was established that a quorum had been satisfied the meeting was called to order at 10:52 AM by Council President Tim Gjenvick. Tim turned the podium over to Pastor Peter Froehlke who led the congregation in an opening litany and song.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Berta Schott moved to approve the minutes from our January 2023 Congregational Meeting. This motion was seconded by Joan New. The congregation voted unanimously to approve them. Next, Joan New moved to approve the minutes from the special October 2023 Congregational Meeting where we voted to adopt the Reconciling In Christ welcoming statement. Her motion was seconded by Berta Schott and unanimously approved by the congregation.

Election of Council and Council Nominating Team

Greg Nowak from the Council Nominating Team introduced the proposed slate of new council members: Michelle Conk, Ellen McBrearity, Beth Leigh Mitchell, and Kathy Nowak. There were no further nominations from the floor. Berta Schott made a motion to close nominations, which was seconded by Joan New. Paper ballots were distributed, marked by the congregation, collected, and counted. [All candidates were elected to a three-year term on POP's council.]

Greg also introduced the proposed slate of the Council Nominating Team for next year: Janis Haddock, Dave Herrington, Peter Perkuhn, and Wendy Schutzer. There were no further nominations from the floor. Berta Schott moved to close nominations and Claudia Thompson seconded the motion. Paper ballots were distributed, marked by the congregation, collected, and counted. [All candidates were elected.]

Pastor Froehlke's Remarks

- Pastor opened with a set of affirmations used by his trainer Kahlil Carmichael, who says them after every session.
 - We are loved*
 - We are forgiven*
 - We are accepted*
 - We are chosen*
 - We are abundantly blessed*
 - We are grateful*

- They are a reminder that we are God's people, and we need that reminder because we are in a seismic shift in our culture and our world. Pastor Peter cited a recent podcast he had listened to that had compared the worth of the movie industry (\$10 billion) with the video gaming industry (\$150 billion).

- Five hundred years ago Martin Luther set words to music to teach the Gospel to the people of that time. Today we too are learning new ways to spread the Gospel, by adapting and learning to sing new songs.
- We are growing as a Church, but the growth represented by the House Next Door, Joyful Noise, and our online livestream presence are not yet reflected on the bottom line of a balance sheet.
- The Church will still be here and we will be singing a new song.
- Pastor Froehlke concluded his remarks by thanking others for their work at POP during the past year: Doug Helvering, Dorothy Safranek, Con Sweeney, Martha Winder, Hannah Froehlke, David New, Dave Herrington, the RIC team, and our outgoing Council members: Tim Gjenvick, David Jeedi, Mary Ellen Glickson, and Wendy Schutzer.

Report from Pastor Selover, Director of the House Next Door

- Pastor Dale recounted the inspiring journey of the House Next Door, our church's venture into stewardship and faith-driven community outreach.
- She emphasized the importance of listening, prayer, and God's guidance in shaping HND's purpose.
- While HND initially focused on spiritual formation, with the addition of Pastor Christine Ruth it has expanded its mission to include mental health — embodying the love of Jesus and providing a safe space for healing and transformation.
- The newly revised HND mission statement articulates its commitment to creating a welcoming environment that nurtures spiritual and emotional well-being.
- She highlighted the significant increase in individuals served at the HND, with 579 people crossing the welcome mat, including 177 first-time visitors in the past year.
- Programs offered in 2023 covered a wide range, from spiritual direction and therapy to various retreats and workshops. She attributed the success of these programs to the dedication of teams, including the Spiritual Formation Team, Vision Team, and program leaders.
- She also mentioned HND's outreach efforts, with Pastor Dale leading workshops and participating in podcasts, spreading the story of the House Next Door.
- There are challenges of managing the growth without sufficient staff and funding.
- Despite these growing pains, there is a profound realization that the ministry's purpose is to be repairers of a broken world, echoing the Judaic concept of Tikkun olan and the Islamic tradition of Islah.

- She underscored the significance of every small act of mending contributing to the ongoing creative and redemptive process.
- The expanding success of HND's ministry necessitates addressing infrastructure needs, including staffing and funding.
- The House Next Door has physically outgrown its current space, with overflow activities now held at Prince of Peace. Pastor Dale raises questions about meeting the navigate these challenges while remaining true to the ministry's purpose.
- Pastor Dale expressed gratitude for witnessing God's transformative work in the HND and calls for continued discernment as the ministry unfolds, emphasizing the community's role as repairers of the world.
- In conclusion Pastor Dale recognized the members of the Spiritual Formation Team and Vision Team who were present at the meeting: Pastor Peter, Ellen McBrearity, Beth Mitchell, Nancy Herrington, and Nancy Reyes.

Report from Dr. Doug Helvering, Minister of Music

- Doug is in his 15th year at Prince of Peace.
- Even if you are not a musician there are opportunities to be a part of Prince of Peace's music ministry.
- Both beginners and pros are welcome, and we have a good time!

Changes to Prince of Peace's Constitution and By-laws

- Joan New, who led the team updating Prince of Peace's Constitution and By-Laws, explained that our constitution has not been updated in several years and, therefore, there were a lot of small differences between our constitution and the ELCA model constitution.
- A summary of the changes appears on first page of the handouts distributed to attendees of this meeting.
- At their last meeting the Council approved these constitution changes and made a motion to present them to the congregation at this meeting.
- There were no comments from the assembled members of POP about the constitution changes.
- (Since we have made no revisions other than those bringing us back in line with the ELCA model constitution, we can do this in one vote; if that were not true it would have required a second vote.)

- The motion to accept the changes to Prince of Peace’s constitution was approved unanimously.
- Regarding POP’s by-laws, there changes were much simpler:
- The description of the Communications Team was revised.
- The description of the Digital Team was revised.
- The Property Team was split into two different teams: Property and Building Use.
- At their last meeting the Council approved these by-laws changes and made a motion to present them to the congregation at this meeting.

Comments and discussion:

- Berta Schott thanked the team responsible for updating the constitution and by-laws (Arundel Clarke, Beth Mitchell, and Joan New) for all the work they did. Moreover, she said it was easy to follow and understand what we are voting on.
- The motion to accept the changes to Prince of Peace’s by-laws was approved unanimously.

[Approval of 2024 Program of Ministry \(Spending Plan\)](#)

- Council President Tim Gjenvick presented our 2024 Spending Plan.
- Tim pointed out that last year we had more income than anticipated, resulting in a net surplus of \$12K.
- Regarding our 2024 numbers:
- Income
- Member pledges are down
- Anticipated group donations are down, primarily due to the departure of two groups formerly using our facilities
- Expenses
- Anticipated expenses for 2024 are up
- Hiring a part-time administrator for the House Next Door

- Salary increases for the Pastors and Music Minister
- The bottom line is that we have a projected shortfall of approximately \$86K.
- Tim made an appeal to members to spread their donations out over the entire year to avoid a scenario where we run out of cash to pay current expenses or staff salaries.
- Tim opened the floor for discussion.
- Dave Herrington mentioned that, as per the Council's suggestion, he is now asking for donations during our livestream.
- Joan New said that while our projected shortfall may seem insurmountable, it is not. We need to keep doing our ministry and somehow or another it will be OK.
- A motion to approve the spending plan was moved and seconded. The vote to approve it was unanimous.

Closing

Tim thanked everyone with the support that everyone has provided to him during his tenure as Council President. He did not seek re-election to Council this year because he anticipates moving out of state. The meeting ended with a hymn and Lord's Prayer.

Pastor's Report—2024 Report

The Church of Misfit Toys

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2

I am surprised to begin this annual report with Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. Rudolph and his adventures help us discern the will of God. Remember that Rudolph's bright red nose was a liability. He was ostracized by the other reindeer. So Rudolph ran away from home landing on the Island of Misfit Toys. This is where unorthodox toys went after they were abandoned by their owners. Other outcasts accompanied Rudolph: an elf that skipped toy making school to become a dentist, an abominable snow monster, a prospector searching for gold at the North Pole. No one in the story fits in.

I wonder if we are the church of misfit toys. Church people have always been cultural misfits. We give voice to the voiceless, we lift up the lowly, we remember the least of these. This not only is our calling, but more and more it is becoming our identity. We are a church that not only welcomes misfits, we are misfits.

Through most of my career I pastored a church that wanted to fit in. Zion Lutheran Church in Long Valley stands in the center of town at the main crossroads. I coined the phrase while I served there, "Zion Lutheran, in the heart of Long Valley." We sought to be respected neighbors, certainly that was not misguided. Prince of Peace wants to be respected neighbors; but even more we seek to be community, to be sanctuary, to be home for people who do not easily fit in.

Are we the church of misfit toys? When I arrived twelve years ago, music and education fueled our ministry. While these ministries continue to be important, today we work at being a Reconciling in Christ congregation. On the third Sunday of the month we worship with Joyful Noise, a service designed for special needs children and their families. Thanks to our Racial Justice team, today we advocate for the powerless and unheard in society. We have entered into partnership with St. Bartholomew Lutheran Church in Trenton, a partnership that continues to grow as we care for the hungry and the immigrant. The fuel feeding all of these ministries is a desire not to conform to the world, but a willingness to be transformed by the will of God.

The irony of the God story is that misfits are not just welcomed, misfits proclaim the gospel. The beauty of the Rudolph story is that Santa used Rudolph to save Christmas. The beauty of our story is that God uses us to save the world. The church of misfit toys. May Prince of Peace embrace this identity.

The Lesson of the Church Parking Lot

For, as I can testify, the churches of Macedonia voluntarily gave according to their means and even beyond their means. Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

2 Corinthians 8:1,7

But how do we pay for this church? Money does not flow to misfits, money flows to the honored.

Juan Soto recently signed a fifteen year contract with the New York Mets for 765 million dollars. If my math is correct, assuming he plays every game in a season, Juan Sota will make 300 thousand dollars a game! He fits quite well into our world. Religious institutions don't have that kind of money, nor should we; but enough to pay our bills would be nice.

Prince of Peace has never been awash in cash, but two years ago we came up with \$70,000 quite easily. You may remember our pot-holed parking lot. The lot got so bad, in fact, that our insurance company was ready to cancel our policy. Given our lack of funds, our Finance Team looked into securing a loan. But before we took out a loan, I suggested asking the congregation for donations. We needed \$60,000, but received \$70,000. The congregation was generous. So generous, in fact, that the extra cash addressed other needed property projects.

Why was this so easy? First, the need was obvious. We all use the parking lot and we all knew its condition. Second, the project was tangible. We could put our money on the table, and in one day it was out with the old and in with the new.

Funding ministry is more nebulous. We don't see the impact of our work. I always liked cutting the grass because I could see the fruit of my labor row by row. I don't see that in ministry. Still, is not what happens inside of the church more important than what happens outside of the church? God is calling us to practice resurrection! The hope is that Juan Soto will help the New York Mets win the World Series, but honestly, what difference can he make in matters of life and death?

St. Paul calls the church in Corinth to excel in faith, and to excel in the generous undertaking of ministry. The churches in Macedonia gave to support this work, even beyond their means. Read on in chapter 8 and you see how the churches gave, not out of duty, but out of excitement for what God was doing in their midst.

I call on Prince of Peace to be as generous in ministry as we were generous with our parking lot. Believe me, changing lives is more inspiring than parking your car or hitting home runs.

The Power of Testimony

Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he? They left the city and were on their way to him. John 4:28-30

In December our Field Ed student, Keerthana Babu, preached the best sermon I have heard from a seminarian. The congregation agreed. The sermon was so good because Keerthana gave her testimony, she told her faith story.

If we do not share our faith stories we will never know how lives are changed. Lutherans hold our faith tight to the chest. Yet, faith stories inspire. Keerthana told us how Christ made such a difference in her life that she is now on track to ordination. On that Sunday the student became the teacher.

The lived experience of the woman in John 4 was transformed by her encounter with Jesus at the well. She was a misfit. It is why she went to the well at noon when nobody would be there. But Jesus not only noticed her, he accepted her. How did the woman respond? She told her faith story. How did that story end?

*Many Samaritans from that city believed in him (Jesus) **because of the woman's testimony.***

Bible study enlightens, theology guides, doctrine informs; but stories inspire, stories change lives, stories grow faith, stories strengthen the church, and yes, stories breed generosity.

We need to tell our faith stories. Project 2025 at Prince of Peace is to become storytellers. Keerthana showed us how in December. Prayerfully ponder your faith story. I will invite you to share it.

Finding Our Voice

But now, because you did not believe my words, you will become mute, unable to speak.

Luke 1:20

Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God.

Luke 1:64

After Zechariah doubted Gabriel's promise of a son to his barren wife Elizabeth, this temple priest was forced into contemplative practice. He had nine months to discern God's call.

The House Next Door breeds storytellers. The ministry reflects Zechariah's journey. Quiet time, prayer time, space for contemplation, a safe place for authentic story telling.

The House Next Door just celebrated ten years of ministry. It is time for Prince of Peace to claim this ministry. The House Next Door does not just happen to be next door to the church, the House Next Door can only happen because of the church next door. No church next door, no House Next Door.

As I have stated, people of faith do not fit neatly into society, but many are finding they no longer fit into the church. A church that expects conformity to easily has said, "be like us or leave." The House Next Door extends Prince of Peace's embrace to these misfits.

The House Next Door is becoming known. This past summer the House Next Door was invited to the tAble, a gathering before the Youth Gathering in New Orleans for special needs youth. Thanks to Bishop Bartholomew bishops in the ELCA are celebrating our work. Folks from around the New Jersey Synod and other faith communities are participating in our ministry. This ministry is being noticed because it models a new way of being church. A friend Roberta Schott met at McCaffery's a few years back asked where her church was located. As Roberta said we are right down the street, the friend said, "is that anywhere near the House Next Door?"

Think about that.

The House Next Door is a safe place for people to share their faith stories. Others are drawn in. The House is growing by word of mouth.

It is time to claim this ministry. The House's work is Prince of Peace's work, and Prince of Peace's work is the House's work. Together we are finding our voice, and together, like Zechariah, we are calling attention to God's work in this place.

Thank You

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:2

I am in year thirty-nine of ordained ministry. I am in year twelve of my call to Prince of Peace. I thank you for our partnership.

Prince of Peace is open to change. Prince of Peace cares for the community and the world at large. Prince of Peace is passionate about justice. Our embrace of God's people and all of God's creation extends far.

This is the only way to be church. I am honored to serve as your pastor.

Pastor Peter Froehlke

January 10, 2025

Minister of Music—2024

The Music Ministry at Prince of Peace is one of our most visible and active ministries. On average, we involve approximately 25 disciples in active participation. During our worship services, the offering of music plays a central role in our worship experience.

In 2024, the work of our Music Ministry continued to provide music for our worship services. In an ongoing effort to minimize costs, we purchased no new musical selections in 2024. Instead, we relied on our great library of musical titles to offer cherished classics and still new-to-us gems to the glory of God and for the enhanced worship experience of our parishioners. We will continue to offer vocal/choral, instrumental, and handbell music for all 2025 worship services.

Throughout the year, Minister of Music Dr. R. Douglas Helvering and Church Musician Victoria Chow shared responsibilities from the piano/keyboard for our livestream, in-person, and outdoor worship services. Dr. Helvering remains on staff in 2025, and Ms. Chow remains our preferred guest musician whenever her services are needed.

I would like to thank all our participants in the ensembles for their participation and dedication to this ministry. Navigating the act of music making as we continue on in this post-pandemic world is still somewhat tricky, and I'm thankful for the support and collaborative spirit of our volunteer musicians. The Music Ministry will continue our rehearsals and worship activities in 2025, keeping a high attention to the sincere intent and offering of music to God. If you have any questions for me, please email rdh@rdouglasshelvering.com – Doug Helvering (Music Minister)

Council Nominees—2024

Joan New

I've been active at POP for more than 30 years. My husband Dave and I raised our three kids here and now enjoy having three grandchildren about an hour away. I've served in many ministries over the years including church council back in the 90s. Currently, I'm in the choir and bell choir and serve as Stewardship chair. I've worked in science grants management for Autism Speaks for the last 15 years.

Christian Oehm

I grew up in Mahwah, NJ, where I attended and was confirmed at Holy Cross Lutheran Church. I served in the choir, and as an acolyte and usher. After meeting my now wife, Jing, I moved to Montgomery in 2016 and we made our home here. Jing and I were married at Prince of Peace in 2019, and our daughter, Jojo, was baptized at Prince of Peace in October 2020. We joined Prince of Peace along with my parents this past year. We look forward to growing our family in this welcoming community. Jing and I are both attorneys with our office in Edison, NJ. In the past, I have coached soccer at recreational and competitive youth levels, and it is something I would love to get back to when time may later permit. In the meantime, I enjoy playing pickup with a local group of guys, and outdoor activities with my family as much as weather allows.

Dorothy Safranek

The Safranek family moved to New Jersey in 2000 from Long Island and were thrilled to find a vibrant and caring church home at Prince of Peace. Since joining POP, we have all been active participants in the music program, and have ushered and greeted over the years. As a member of the finance team, I've made good use of my accounting degree and CPA license. I've been on several staff search committees, taught Sunday School, was a Youth Group leader, helped two American Boys Choir teens participate at POP for several years, helped organize a book fair, started the small lending library, and recently joined the knitting group. I grew up in the Lutheran faith and have always been active in various community groups. I was active in the Girl Scouts for over 30 years, as a scout and a leader. I recently retired from the Controller position at MCCC and enjoy spending more time with my husband, Peter, children (Allison, Matthew and Elizabeth) and new grandchildren Emma and Brynn. I welcome the chance to be on council — listening to new ideas, finding new ways to serve those in our community (near and far), and contributing to the growth and spiritual well-being of our church.

Con P. Sweeney

I have been a member of Prince of Peace since 2021. I arrived in 2020 when, after a lifetime of being a Roman Catholic, I had decided that I needed a religious experience which was more fulfilling and whose values were compatible with my own. With the help of Pastor Peter and other members of the congregation, I made this transition. Since arriving, I've participated on the Racial Justice Team, writing the monthly holiday Tidings article, and the Communications Team, being one of the Sunday videographers. Participating in congregation activities has led me to visit St. Bart's and Princeton Alliance Church helping me to better understand Prince of Peace's community involvement. My wife, Yoshiko, and I live in Lawrenceville. Since retiring from the corporate world, I've been self-employed in social media consultancy.

Council President's Report January 2024

Your congregation council meets 6 times a year, with the executive team meetings in between those meetings. We start all meetings with a devotion and/or time of prayer. We pray to be faithful and responsible.

Prince of Peace continues to be blessed with vibrant ministries. Thank you to all team leaders and team members! Please do read the ministry reports and you will find within them a desire

- to try new things,
- to reach out to those in need,
- to address the ills of our society,
- to learn how to do all these ministries (sometimes in new ways),
- to be generous in a variety of ways, and
- to be faithful.

Spurred on by what we learned from Sarah Manning and the Bishop's Challenge, we embarked on a 12-month journey to collect 1000 pounds of plastic bags and film to keep those plastics out of the landfills and to receive a bench made out of said plastics. A bench is much needed in our memorial garden. Our partners at St. Bart's are collecting with us and they are thrilled to help us out. After 2 and a half months, we are on a great pace to achieve our goal!

We do have our challenges on the financial front but the deficit for 2024 is less than projected. We will continue to have financial challenges but we will step out in faith and reality that God will lead us ever onward.

We continue to have visitors and new members become disciples with us. This is always uplifting and we rejoice.

Among the many blessings at Prince of Peace are Pastors Peter and Dale. Thank you for your faithful leadership.

I would also like to thank Claudia Thompson for taking on the role of Vice President and all the members of the church council - Jessica Clarke, Michelle Conk, Ellen McBrearity, Beth Mitchell, Kathy Nowak, Christian Oehm, Dorothy Safranek, and Con Sweeney for their service.

Blessings and peace,

Joan New
Council President

Nominating Team nominees—2024

Carol Baldessari

I have been a member of POP since June 2022. The main activity I have been involved in is singing in the Choir. I have also volunteered to bring refreshments for fellowship and have been a lector a few times. I understand how important it is for POP to elect a skilled Church Council. I am willing to help nominate candidates who will run for the Council .

Charles Frantz

Dr. Charles Frantz has been a member of Prince of Peace Church since 1991. He has taught music history, theory, and piano at Westminster Choir College of Rider University, Temple University, Rutgers University (where he earned a Ph.D. in Musicology) and at The College of New Jersey. Charlie and his wife Margaret live in Yardley, PA.

Lisa Schott

My name is Lisa Schott and I am running for Nominating Team 2025. I have been a member of Prince Of Peace for fifty years so, one could say I grew up in this church. As a child I, participated in youth choir, Sunday School, Confirmation class, Vacation Bible School and youth group. As an adult, I have served as Sunday School Teacher, Vacation Bible School helper, assisting minister and communion assistant. Presently, I am a member of Altar Guild, Reconciling In Christ Team and Racial Justice Team. I also served on the Nominating Team several years ago. I enjoy being a lector, attending Pastor's classes, the weekly Prayer Circle and volunteering at our partner church, St. Bartholomew's food pantry.

Newman Wilson

Newman Wilson has been a member of Prince of Peace (PoP) for over three decades. During this time, he has participated in a range of PoP activities, and has served on PoP council, and PoP nominating team. He currently helps with livestreaming the PoP worship services. After a career as research engineer, he manages university research programs and is involved with IEEE, a worldwide professional organization for the advancement of technology for humanity.

Finance Team—2024

The Finance Team is responsible for maintaining the financial records of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church (POP), making disbursements, recording income, interfacing with financial institutions, and handling all related financial matters that may arise.

The Finance Team's accomplishments for the year are:

- Prepared financial statements for each month of the year
- Began periodic financial reviews with the HND
- Paid all vendors and staff reimbursements
- Distributed congregants' contribution statements
- Recorded all funds received and deposited these into POP's bank account
- Completed an audit of POP's financial records and processes under the direction of a retired CPA using the NJ Synod's audit guidelines
- Completed POP's recordkeeping from QuickBooks to Icon Solutions thereby reducing costs, improving efficiencies, and permitting true fund accounting
- Entered two years of financial data into Icon

In addition to its regular duties, the Finance Team will be doing the following in 2025:

- Conduct an audit which is underway and present its findings to POP's council
- Prepare a phased spending plan
- Update financial statements
- Introduce quarterly financial reporting to the congregation
- Documenting POP's financial procedures
- Securing a separate and secure workspace for the Finance and Property Teams' records

Finance Team:

Phil Herrington, Greg Nowak, Dorothy Safranek, Con P. Sweeney, Martha Winder

Altar Guild—2024

The ministry of the Altar Guild goes on behind the scenes, and, when all goes smoothly, is often unnoticed. The Altar Guild mission is to attend to everything that relates to the altar. Our responsibilities include setting up and cleaning up for every service, polishing metals, making or purchasing new paraments, vestments and linens, replenishing supplies of bread, gluten-free wafers, wine, juice and candles, and participating in rites like the stripping of the altar on Maundy Thursday.

This year, we partnered with our Field Ed student, Sara Manning, in her goal to promote care of our planet and all living things within our work. As always, we recycled used wine and juice bottles and cardboard packing materials. We researched options to replace plastic individual communion cups, and moved to compostable communion cups. We composted used plants and flowers, and began a narthex box to return vases and bowls to Wildflower Farms, our florist, for reuse. We recently placed decals on the large sanctuary windows to deter bird strikes. During outdoor worship we moved to intinction, rather than individual communion kits, also reducing our plastic use.

Highlights of 2024:

- 52 regular indoor Sunday worship services were cared for by Altar Guild members.
- 7 special services, including Ash Wednesday, Christmas and Holy Week were cared for by Altar Guild members.
- 32 outdoor Sunday worship services with communion were cared for by Altar Guild members.
- 9 Joyful Noise youth worship services with communion were cared for by Altar Guild members.

Six volunteers assisted me on the Altar Guild in 2024. They are all veteran members, with many years of experience and I am grateful for their diligent service. Thank you to: Phyllis Church, Kathy Nowak, Shari Rexroad, Ginger Reiersen, Lisa Schott, and Martha Winder. Our family members regularly help out; we are grateful to them! Joe, Tom, and John Durie set up the Christmas tree and Easter cross each year. We also work closely with Wendy Schutzer, who coordinates plant orders and develops inspiring sanctuary decorations for our major Church seasons.

We are ready to welcome new team members. Altar guild is a contemplative, behind-the-scenes way to serve the worship experience. Please volunteer to help in this important ministry. Come see any of us after services, or contact me at nbdurie@gmail.com

Submitted by Nancy Durie

Building Use Team—2024

The Building Use Team was created several years ago when POP discovered that the community had a need for space to meet and we had a need to provide this space. During 2024, we have had several groups utilize our space on a regular basis. These include the Joyful Baptist Korean Church, Pranavam Dance School, Power Speakers, as well as the HND for several large HND events. The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts hold meetings and events throughout the year and AA also continues to meet in person. We provided space for a music summer camp and the Pranavam Dance School this past summer. Throughout the year, we have also made our sanctuary available for many recitals and fundraisers for various causes such as a diabetes fund raiser. POP is blessed to be able to provide so much to so many.

Our church is currently booked Monday through Friday evenings and Sunday afternoons. During this year, we made the decision to no longer have groups book the Community Room for long term use on Saturdays so that the church and HND would have greater availability of the premises for activities.

This year the team set up a quarterly zoom meeting schedule and refined procedures, rules and regulations in order to address several issues that arose from outside groups miss using our facilities. Our current groups are working out well and communicating issues on a timely basis. The automated code lock on the white doors has been very useful as outside users are assigned a unique numeric code for their scheduled time at the church and therefore only have the ability to enter the church during their booked time. A special thanks to Dave Herrington who is the administrator of both the church and HND keyless entries.

Those utilizing our facilities are always impressed by the rooms and are greatly appreciative of the use of this space. We would not be able to do this without the help of many people. Thank you to the Property team for keeping our facilities clean, the facilities usable and the equipment working. Our Digital Team continues to provide electronics for certain events thanks to Dave Herrington and Con Sweeney.

Our team is unique as it is the only team that raises funds for operations and improvements. We always are happy to welcome new team members, so if you are interested in being part of the Building Use Team, please contact Dorothy Safranek.

Respectively submitted by the Building Use Team –
Dave Herrington, Christian Oehm, Dorothy Safranek and Con Sweeney

Christian Education—2024

Field Education

Prince of Peace continues to sponsor Field Education students from Princeton Seminary. In the spring Sara Manning concluded her Field Education. A highlight of her year was the field trip Sara hosted at the Princeton Seminary Farminary. Nearly 30 POP'ers attended on a cold evening in April to learn about eco-theology and the work of the Farminary.

In September the congregation welcomed Keerthana Babu. Keerthana is a second year student at the seminary. She will be with us through April.

Prince of Peace has a long tradition of welcoming Field Ed student. We thank the congregation for your support and for being teachers to these fine students.

Pastor Class

Pastor hosted two Pastor Classes this year. In May he led a two week study on the Formula of Concord, one of our Lutheran Confessional documents. In October he led a four week discussion on Martin Luther's 1534 Bible Project.

Multicultural Lutheran Leadership Event

In July Pastor accompanied Morrigan Clarke to the ELCA Youth sponsored MYLE event prior to the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans. MYLE was a three day event celebrating the diversity with the ELCA. We thank the congregation for their spiritual and financial support.

tAble

Running concurrently with MYLE was tAble, a youth conference directed to special needs young people and their families. Brody Moore and his mother Stephanie attended from POP. Again we thank the congregation for their spiritual and financial support. Pastor Dale and Jess Clarke were also on the leadership team for tAble. We thank them for their time and gifts shared with the church at large.

Confirmation

Morrigan Clarke and Brody Moore were confirmed on May 19th. Morrigan completed her three year Confirmation program and Brody completed a special program with the help of Pastor and his mother Stephanie.

First Communion

On June 9th Saeed Wright celebrated his First Communion after completing instruction with Pastor.

Adult Class

The Adult Class remains the prime offering of Christian Education at Prince of Peace. This past year we appreciated many different teachers. We thank Rev.Dr. Paul Rorem, Dr. Karlfried Froehlich, Chaplain Claudia Thompson, Pastor JJ Simpson-Keelan, Sara Manning, Andrew Steele from Global Refuge, Seminarian Sara Manning, Don Mahler, The Bayard Rustin Center for Social Justice, IRise, and speakers from the Coalition of Natives and Allies. Coming this spring Dr. Denis Olson will join us for Lenten study on the Old Testament. Dr. Olson has recently retired from Princeton Seminary and is a member of Abiding Presence Lutheran Church in Ewing. Keerthana Babu, our Field Ed student will be teaching in February. And we are pleased again that Dr. Rorem will be teaching on beloved Lutheran hymns in February and March.

Pastor Peter

Digital Team-2024

During the past year Prince of Peace's Digital Team has been performing these services on an ongoing basis:

- Maintain POP's WiFi network, including periodically upgrading the firmware on our three WiFi access points and our central controller unit
- Livestream weekly worship services on Facebook
- Copy worship service videos from Facebook to our YouTube archives
- Maintain POP's WordPress website and monitor it to ensure that it receives security patches on an ongoing basis
- Work with the Communications Team, as needed, to provide "how-to" support in providing useful and timely content on POP's WordPress website
- Work with the Building Use team to provide ongoing support for our two digital locks, one on the Community Wing door and the other on the back door of the House Next Door
- Promote the use of AI Assistant transcriptions of Zoom meetings as a time saver for meeting organizers
- Provide technical support for POP email lists
- Maintain a repository of needed logins and passwords used by the Digital Team
- Maintain a set of Google Drive folders for use by POP staff and teams
- Act as software troubleshooters for other POP teams and staff as needed

Additionally, over the past year the Digital Team has been involved in the following special projects:

- We are working with the Property Team to gain access to the two digital locks in the Sanctuary via the Internet via a RedLINK Gateway device (project is ongoing).
- We ran a trial of the Flocknote communications package as possible replacement of our existing email lists, Google Groups and EZMLM, both of which have intermittent problems.

As with any endeavor many hands make light work. If you have a flair for audio, video, electronics, or anything digital at all, we are too few with too much to do. We could use your help! Please contact team leader Dave Herrington for more information.

POP Digital Team
Anil Chindha
Dave Herrington (Chair)
Con Sweeney
Dan Ungar
Newman Wilson

Parish Care Team —2024

Parish Care is caring for each other in our Church Family and Community. We offer care/support in times of joy, sorrow, when there are concerns or worries, there is a need for someone to listen or just because. Through our caring actions we hope to make all feel welcomed by our church family - no matter what is happening in their lives. Through our care we renew our relationship with God and Jesus and we can then go out into the community and share the good news with others as Joyful Disciples Living the Faith.

We show our care in many different ways.

- Assist with daily needs: provide rides, meals, send notes, make phone calls, visit those that cannot get here.
- Communicate with our community: mail materials on spiritual and development growth for newborns and dealing with grief , provide Care Notes, mail advent calendars and Valentine Day Care Boxes to young adults away at school and Valentine Bags to our Senior citizens not able to get out, mail Sunday bulletin to homebound members, make periodic visits to those that cannot get to church on Sundays. Provide greeting cards and calendars to local senior residences.
- Provide for Special Events: Memorial/funeral services and receptions, graduations, weddings, and installations. For funeral receptions we provide a space where folks can gather with family and friends to remember and for some nourishment for the body along with support for all those grieving.
- Provide prayer cards and knitted prayer pocket squares.
- Taking the time to greet, welcome and get to know the folks in our church family.
- 2025 Calendars were gathered and distributed to 5 local senior living facilities

All of these things tell all, that they are important members of our family and loved by GOD.

There are many folks to thank for their service to this ministry.

I would like to mention just a few:

Ginger Reiersen and Chris Wethe for their continued care for our Care Notes display in the breezeway.

Many thank for the many others that contribute their time and talents, funds, items, home baked goodies for Valentine Day Care Package project and those provided meals and soup as needed.

The Joyful knitters for keeping our prayer squares well stocked.

Without your generous support we would not be able to reach so many.

We would like to invite all to join our ministry. We have a few specific and many open-ended projects, and a need for an "on-call" team of providers.

Respectively submitted,
Martha Winder

The Peace and Cherry Tree Garden—2024

Thanks to a small but dedicated group of volunteers, the Peace Garden and Cherry Tree Garden continued to produce amazing amounts of vegetables and herbs for the food pantry at St. Bartholomew Lutheran Church in Trenton . Despite nature’s pests best efforts, the gardens still produced 676 pounds of produce in 2024!!! Crops included kale, collard greens, spinach, Swiss chard, mustard greens, peppers, tomatoes, green onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes, cucumbers, eggplants, lettuce, green beans, okra, peppers (hot and sweet), zucchini, beets, carrots, garlic, radishes, turnips, chives, dill, parsley, fennel, basil, mint, thyme, oregano, and even figs and blueberries - WOW!!! Some weeks we added cut flowers for the grateful recipients in Trenton. Whoever drove the produce to St. Barts was almost immediately surrounded by needy families grateful for the freshly picked healthy addition to the food provided by the community.

We are also grateful for the volunteers who worked once or twice a week to plant, harvest, pack, and deliver fresh food to those in need. Our season started with many frustrating weeks as ground hogs continued to dig their way under our fence and destroy crops and some insects attacked the tomatoes for another few weeks, but our dedicated volunteers continued to pick off the insects and search out the holes to get as much as we could save.

The gardens could not have survived if not for the countless hours put in by Master Gardener and decades-long friend of Prince of Peace, Nancy Nicosia, who grew hundreds of seedlings at her Hightstown house before they could be put in the ground, came by on her own time outside of the dedicated work days to plant, trim, and water, and agreed to coordinate the garden one more year after having announced her “retirement” in 2023. She couldn’t have done without dedicated volunteers Varshini Kaki, Kathy Morris, Joan Prins, Nancy Reyes, Shari Rexroad, Berta Schott, and Liz Zarillo who kept up with the gardens throughout the season. Many thanks to Liz, Kathy and Nancy who made multiple trips with vehicles full of produce to Trenton and/or picked up plants and seeds from Philadelphia Horticultural Society to save money from our depleting funds.

Gardening will resume around March and we’ll need more volunteers (upper elementary through adults) —no experience necessary, membership in POP not required - to help for a few hours once or twice a week, whenever you can, through October. Thank you to POP for covering the not-insignificant cost of water as the church has done since the Peace Garden was begun in 2014. Unfortunately, there will be added expenses in the coming year. The Peace Garden fencing needs to be replaced, deeper than previously, to deter groundhogs, which will require funding and physical skills. More help will also be needed to go to and from Philly every few months to keep costs down. Please consider how you can help with either of these or have connections in the community that might be able to do so...Please contact POP liaison Nancy Reyes or new Master Gardener Shari Rexroad to volunteer in any way.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nancy Reyes, liaison

Property Management & Maintenance Team Report—2024

The Property Management & Maintenance (PMM) Team is responsible for the overall management and maintenance of Prince of Peace Church and the House Next Door properties. The team is responsible for overseeing service contracts, required inspections, and property maintenance and repair issues. The PMM team is separate and distinct from the Building Use Team, which oversees all issues related to the use of the building by outside persons/groups.

During 2024, the PMM team oversaw the following contracts: HVAC; waste services; pest control; landscaping & snow plowing; gutter cleaning; custodial/cleaning services; and emergency systems (fire alarms, fire extinguishers and emergency lighting). Required inspections were completed by West Windsor Township; Continental Fire & Safety (kitchen hood); Quick Stop Fire Protection (fire extinguishers); and Vector Security System (fire alarms).

Specific work completed in 2024 included the following:

- Lighting: Lighting throughout the building was upgraded from incandescent and fluorescent types to LED type.
- Time Clocks: Astronomical time clocks were installed for several exterior lighting circuits.
- Sanctuary Thermostats: Sanctuary thermostats have been connected to the wireless network so that they may be controlled remotely.
- Community Wing Chair Carts: Damaged wheels on the chair rolling carts were replaced with heavy duty wheels.
- System Repairs: Various minor system repairs were completed: water meter replacement in janitorial closet by American Water; HVAC minor repairs by Tindall & Ranson.

The PMM team also reinstated the “Property Work Day” in June. Many indoor and outdoor tasks were completed by church members, including cleaning; sanding, spackling and painting; and pruning trees and shrubs.

The PMM team is grateful for the following people who have continued to take responsibility for specific areas on the church grounds:

- Outdoor Chapel – Nancy & Bob Durie
- Memorial Garden – Kathy & Greg Nowak
- Peace Garden – Nancy Reyes
- Labyrinth & Tree of Life Chapel – Nancy Herrington

The PMM team would also like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the following persons: Peter Perkuhn and Joan Prins; Dave and Nancy Herrington; Dan Unger.

Looking forward, it is hoped that the PMM team can address the following issues in the coming year:

- Replacement of Old Wing thermostats that may be controlled remotely
- Painting of Old Wing doors
- Exterior tree trimming
- Assess water seepage under floor tiles in New Wing and obtain quotes for addressing issue
- Continue to sponsor Property Work Days (preferably two per year)

Respectfully submitted,
Sean Cuddahy & Wendy Schutzer

Racial Justice—2024

POP's Racial Justice Team continued to lead the congregation in efforts to work toward more just and equitable communities while educating ourselves on ways that systemic racism affects all of us and our neighbors, no matter our race, religion, nationality or ancestry. In our monthly meetings to share resources and knowledge and plan programs, we partnered with other local groups for relevant local events, shared our learning and opportunities for members and friends to raise their own awareness, and added monthly discussions of the many different Asian cultures for the past year. The team sponsored two major events in 2024 which brought in community members in addition to church members and friends.

As follow-up to the orange banner hung since 2023 in honor of the many children who lost their lives in residential schools, the team worked with the CNA (Coalition of Natives and Allies) to bring two Native American speakers and their ally, Lynn Azarchi, to POP as speakers. Donna Fann-Boyle (Choctaw/Cherokee) and Kelley Bova (Dakota Sioux) shared their personal experiences fighting against Native American sports mascots, retrieving the remains of children from the Carlisle residential school, and finding her birth family and tribe after being adopted off her reservation as an infant. To encourage advocacy, those attending were given the opportunity to sign letters to their representatives in support of establishing a Truth and Healing Commission to continue researching the truth about such schools.

In September for God's Work Our Hands Day, the team organized a Refugee Welcome Picnic and forum. Speaker Diana Bowen, Executive Director of Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Service and Empowerment (I-Rise) and Louise Sandburg, coordinator of The Jewish Center Interfaith Refugee Resettlement Committee shared their work helping refugees (families and individuals approved by the government before coming to the US and brought to Central Jersey) find homes and jobs, learn English and assimilate to life in Mercer County through minimal government subsidies and the help of many volunteers from various faith communities. Our last speaker was Farida Almouslem, a Syrian mother, wife, and ObGyn with twenty years of professional experience before and during the war in Syria, now studying to get her license to practice and continue saving lives in America. Almost thirty refugees and volunteers joined POP members for a typical American picnic including Halal food (since most were Muslim), games and activities, and walks through the Peace and Cherry Tree Gardens where they could get fresh herbs, cherry tomatoes, and a surprise favorite, green tomatoes (to make a special chutney) to take home along with Goody Bags filled with practical items as well as a book about NJ.

Team members represented POP at meetings of community and Synod anti-racist and advocacy groups and volunteered at events such as the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum Juneteenth celebration. Pastor Froehke led other related forums and the team's Free Racial Justice Lending Library expanded with more fiction and nonfiction books for all ages to check out at your leisure. Many thanks to Kathy and Greg Nowak, our volunteer librarians.

Submitted by
Nancy Reyes (nancyauerreyes@gmail.com)

Reconciling in Christ—2024

We affirm the humanity and sacredness of people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions so that all of God's beloveds can live lives as God created them and to the Glory of God.

2024 was the Reconciling in Christ's (RiC) second full year of activity. It's accomplishments for the year are:

Submitted formal application to be recognized as a full member of Reconciling in Christ and was accepted by Reconciling Works

Tim Gjenvick and Con Sweeney met with Chief Rob Garofalo of the West Windsor Township Police Department to apprise him of POP's becoming an RiC congregation to ask if there were any local concerns. None were noted

Lisa Schott attended the South East's Synod's LGBTQIA+ Zoom workshop

Con donated two books on behalf of the team (*The Gay Revolution* and *She's Not There*) to the Racial Justice Library

POP's annual RiC service occurred on Sunday, June 16th, with Pastor JJ Simpson-Keelan preaching and conducting an Adult Class. This was the result of a pulpit swap with Pastor Peter Froehlke

The team moved to biweekly Zoom meetings occurring every Friday at 4:00PM

Joan New and Con met with St. Mark's in Hamilton after they expressed interest in pursuing RiC

Con met with the Bayard Rustin Center (BRCSJ) for Social Justice in Princeton, a local LGBTQIA+ advocacy group and safe space, to discuss POP's RiC initiatives. These were received favorably and POP was invited back to their monthly first Friday morning breakfasts to stay in touch and share information about activities

POP was invited to join BRCSJ's Princeton Pride Parade in June. The pastors and several congregants participated in the parade and the activities afterwards

Through BRCSJ, con met Nick Petruncio, a journalist from *Out in Jersey*, who will be writing an article about RiC for the magazine

The team sponsored fellowship on two Sundays during the year

Reconciling in Christ Team:

Pastor Peter Froehlke, Beth Mitchell, Joan New, Lisa Schott, Con P. Sweeney

Social Outreach Ministry—2024

Our Mission: To encourage, stimulate, and lead our disciples at Prince of Peace to reach out to the community, state, synod, and the world. To identify, understand, and minister with Christian faith, love, and compassion to the needs of others.

We have been working together with other teams, the House Next Door, the Council, and the pastors to provide ways to use our gifts, our time, and our compassion to address social, emotional, educational, and physical needs, and justice issues of those in our community and beyond. Here are some of the ways the Social Outreach Ministry Team has supported and facilitated these efforts:

- On-going support of our sister congregation, St. Bartholomew (St. Bart's) by supplying groceries for them to distribute to the community around them. A Food of the Month effort facilitated those donations. They can no longer distribute clothing because they don't have enough volunteers. During the growing season, over 900 pounds of fresh organic vegetables and herbs from the Peace and Cherry Tree Gardens went to them to distribute. In August, Prince of Peacers donated over 30 full backpacks to be given to school children, and on Halloween several folks worked at their Trunk or Treat event, giving out candy, some of which came from Prince of Peace. For Thanksgiving, we donated food bags and approximately 40 turkeys and hams for their Thanksgiving baskets. Christmas gifts for the children that they serve were also donated. Monetary gifts have been given as well.
- Working in the Peace and Cherry Tree Gardens.
- Through offerings during the Wednesday Advent and Lenten services supporting ELCA World Hunger, as well as through the donations in the envelopes that were provided with your regular offering envelopes.
- Supporting Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey (LSM/NJ) in several ways, including supplying grocery store gift cards and Easter greeting cards for their Easter Food Drive for families and senior citizens in need and providing the money to fulfill the Christmas gift wishes of 25 children. Additional monetary donations enabled LSM/NJ to gift even more children at Christmas. Beth Gebhart, on staff at LSM/NJ, sent deep thanks for our continuing support of LSM/NJ ministries throughout the NJ Synod.
- Responding to specific requests as they arose.

Thank you for your ministry in these and so many other ways. The love of Christ shines through you and your generosity as we build relationships with each other and those in need. If you would like to serve on the Social Outreach Ministry Team, you would be most welcome. Let Berta Schott or one of the pastors know.

Statistical Summary—2024

Disciples Received in 2024

Christopher Resch
Beck Resch
Emily Resch
Nathan Resch
Catherine Corcoran
Margaret Frantz

Disciples Removed in 2024

Tim Gjenvick

Baptized in 2024

Elizabeth Oehm
Jonah Mendoza

Confirmed in 2024

Morrigan Clarke
Brody Moore

First Communion in 2024

Saeed Wright

Funerals in 2024

Ted Somers
Matthew Rexroad

Weddings in 2024

Jonathan Wilson and Zhangjing Xu

Disciples	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
	282	288



ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

OPENING LITURGY

Confident in God's generosity and gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us praise God and give thanks ...

God, we praise you and give you thanks.
You are good, and your mercy endures forever.

You gave us a garden with good food to eat.
We praise you for food that nourishes us.

You rescued your people from slavery.
We praise you for freedom.

You gave us prophets to correct, rebuke and encourage us.
We bless you for your justice and mercy.

You gave us your Son, Jesus, to love, redeem and save us.
We praise you for his death and resurrection.

You gave us your Holy Spirit to be our Advocate and Comforter.
We bless you for the gifts of every tribe and nation.

Strengthen your church with every spiritual gift
and commission us again to be your servant people.

Multiply in us the fruit of the spirit:
love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Send us in your love and mercy,
that the world may know you and praise you.

Now Thank We All Our God



1 Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voic - es,
2 Oh, may this boun - teous God through all our life be near us,
3 All praise and thanks to God the Fa - ther now be giv - en,



who won - drous things has done, in whom this world re - joic - es;
with ev - er joy - ful hearts and bless - ed peace to cheer us,
the Son, and Spir - it blest, who reign in high - est heav - en,



who, from our moth - ers' arms, has blest us on our way
and keep us all in grace, and guide us when per - plexed,
the one e - ter - nal God, whom earth and heav'n a - dore;



with count - less gifts of love, and still is ours to - day.
and free us from all harm in this world and the next.
for thus it was, is now, and shall be ev - er - more.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 840

Text: Martin Rinkhart, 1586-1649; tr. Cathering Winkworth, 1827-1878

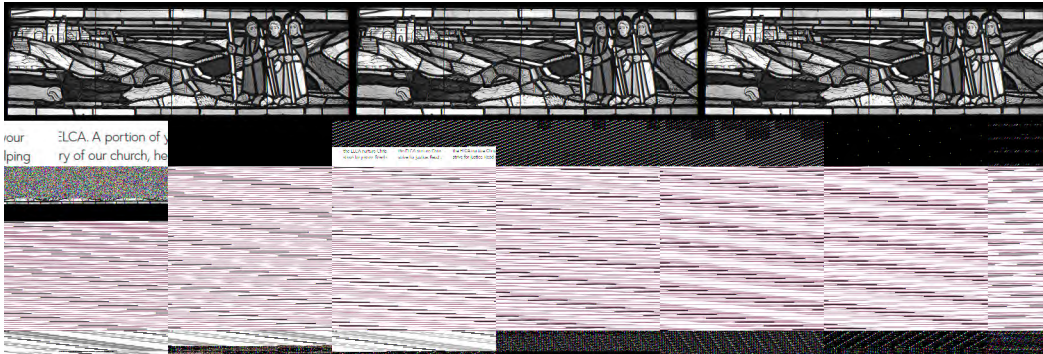
Music: NUN DANKET ALLE GOTT, Johann Crüger, 1598-1662

Let us pray.

Gracious God, you are the giver of every good gift. Bless us with all that we need for ministry in your name, that we might be a blessing to others. In the name of the one who broke bread and fed the multitudes, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

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 [LivingLutheran.org/SOFIA](https://www.lutheran.org/SOFIA).



*Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Practicing Resurrection With Gratitude and Grace*

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Rev. Dale Selover, Director of the House Next Door
Cell: 908-797-7336
Email: hnd@popnj.org
Website: www.housenextdoornj.org

Keerthana Babu, Seminarian

Dr. R. Douglas Helvering, Minister of Music
Victoria Chow, Church Musician
Sherri Daniels, Parish Administrator

the House Next Door

Annual Report 2024

The House Next Door offers a safe space and a place of grace for all who are seeking healing, wholeness, and transformation.



COME AND SEE!

As I sit down to write this report, I have recently learned of the death of Don Harvey, a beloved member of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Kendall Park, where I served as pastor for five years. Don was the loving patriarch of that congregation and the finest churchman I have ever known. To me, and to everyone who knew him, Don embodied the love of Christ in our midst.

Don was the first one to arrive at church on Sunday mornings, and the first to welcome every member and every visitor. One of the things that I respected most about Don was how, even in his eighties, he continued to be open to new experiences, to learning, to growing, and to deepening his relationship with God. Don's mantra was "Come and see!" He was always reminding the Council, the congregation, and his pastor of the central mission of the church – to invite others to come and see what God is doing in our midst. Don's was a life of invitation. He was constantly inviting others to "Come and see!" And he encouraged all of us to do the same.

Throughout the Gospels Jesus extends his invitation to "Come and see!" It is an invitation to a deeper relationship with Christ, where new life is found. As we read in story after story, when people say yes to Christ's invitation, when they encounter him, transformation happens, new life is found, they are never the same, and they are moved to go and tell others.



GO AND TELL!

Encounters with Jesus always appear to be book-ended with invitations. There is the initial invitation to "Come and see!" And then after the conversation or the teaching or the healing, Jesus extends the invitation to "Go and tell!"

The ministry of the House Next Door continues to grow because everyone, and I mean everyone, who attends an event invites others to "Come and see!" Do you remember the Faberge commercial from the 1980's? (I know, I'm dating myself here). Actress Heather Locklear says, "When I first tried Faberge Organic Shampoo, it was so good, I told two friends about it, and they told two friends, and so on, and so on, and so on..." That is what is happening at the House Next Door. People are invited to "Come and see!". They are invited to a deeper relationship with Jesus where new life is found, and when they experience this encounter, they then "Go and tell!" They tell their story, and they share their experiences with others.

It is my great joy to share with you just a sampling of the stories that participants are sharing about their experiences at the House Next Door:



“

This retreat was deeply healing to my soul.

You can't find this anywhere else!

As I prepare for medical leave, this house has been a refuge for me.

I experienced this retreat as a time of renewal for body, mind and spirit.

This time away was pure grace. It is critical for the church to offer these days of respite given the demands and challenges of parish ministry in this day.

The House Next Door provided a safe place for a group of pastors to bring our vulnerabilities and pain, then gently move us toward rest and peace.

The House Next Door is my "go to" place for meeting friends, praying, getting away and meeting God. It is my home.

The hospitality of the House Next Door is second to none. It beckons me come in and relax. Be with your Maker. Keep up this great and necessary God-work.

Blessings to you, Pastor Dale, and your community of caring, who are invested in helping us thrive.

Spiritual Direction has been, and continues to be, a precious and transformative gift. My weariness returns to wonder and my exhaustion transformed into a fresh embrace of the Holy Spirit's leading.

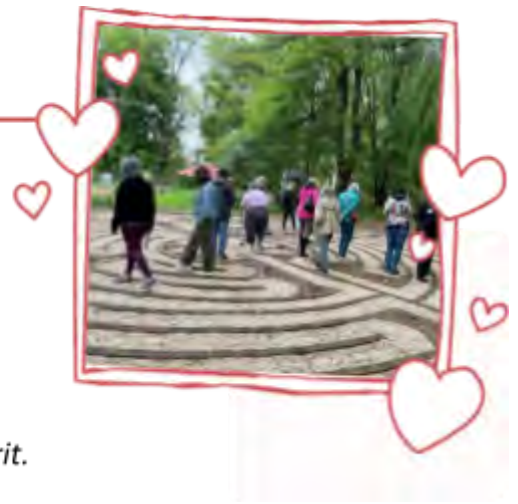
I am a pastoral care provider. The House Next Door makes it possible for me to experience care. Time spent in Spiritual Direction is a wellspring.

Group Spiritual Direction is the most meaningful thing I do each month. The retreat was a soul-saving gift of grace in a time of true need.

I'm a seeker...I'll be there!

This house has become an oasis for me.

The House Next Door gives me hope for the Church.



”

LIVING THE MISSION

Like Don Harvey, the House Next Door embodies invitation: Come and see! Go and tell!

This is the work of the Church. This is the work of Prince of Peace. This is our mission. To invite. To welcome. To provide a safe space and a place of grace for all to dwell in the heart of God.



THANK YOU

I conclude with these words from a colleague who shared his experience of the House Next Door:

God found a way through the vision, investment, and commitment of Prince of Peace to make possible what Pastor Dale and the House Next Door provide. I suspect others who have encountered such renewal have their own stories that echo humble appreciation for what has been received and anticipate what the Spirit has planned.

Thank you, Prince of Peace, for your vision, your investment, and your commitment to this ministry. It is making a difference. It is changing lives. Come and see! Then, go and tell!

Faithfully submitted,

Pastor Dale Selover

Pastor of Spiritual Formation Director
of the House Next Door

