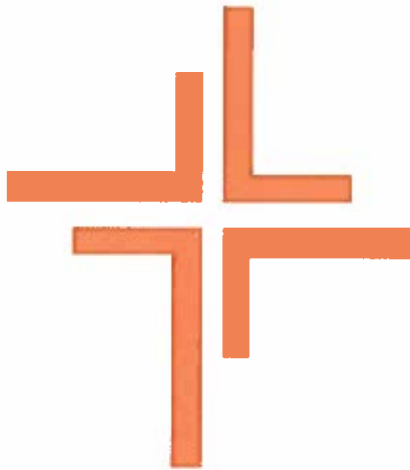


# Annual Report 2024



SHARING - LOVING – SERVING

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING  
SUNDAY March 2, 2025  
1:00 P.M.

**Desert Cross Lutheran Church**

[www.desertcross.org](http://www.desertcross.org)  
480-730-8600

Desert Cross Tempe  
8600 South McClintock  
Tempe, Arizona 85284

Desert Cross Gilbert  
3225 S. Lindsay Rd, Suite 101  
Gilbert, Arizona 85297

## THE CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL

### January 1, 2024 – May 20, 2024

#### Council

Angela Nannenga	President
Anna Sion	Vice President
Brent Borchers	Treasurer
Haley Perez	Secretary
Tom Rewolinski	Past President
Adam Pfau	
Adam Clark	
Carolyn Perkins	
Vacant	
Vacant	
Pastor Andrea Cain	
Pastor Thadd Book	

### May 20, 2024 – December 31, 2024

#### Council

Anna Sion	President
Katie Toasperm	Vice President
Brent Borchers	Treasurer
Marie Ihlefeld	Secretary
Angela Nannenga	Past President
Adam Clark	
Carolyn Perkins	
Vicki English	
Gail Dempsey	
Mari Johnson	
Pastor Andrea Cain	
Pastor Thadd Book	

### Staff

Senior Pastor\*  
Associate Pastor\*  
Director of Operations and Property\*  
Office Administrator  
Accountant  
Director of Worship and Media Arts\*  
Sound Technician  
Worship Associate  
Worship Coordinator  
Director of Adult Ministries\*  
Director of Children's Ministries\*  
Children's Ministry Assistant  
Parish Nurse

Rev. Andrea L. Cain  
Rev. Thaddeus M. Book  
Douglas W. Bjotvedt  
Wendy Williamson  
Deanna Soll  
Johannes Van Rossum  
Shelby Watts  
Christine Soll  
Arthur Krzyzewski  
Denise McClellan  
Shannon Fossett  
Ariane Nannenga  
Denise Viker, R.N.

\*Full-time

### *Mission Statement*

As a **Missional** Congregation,  
we **celebrate** Christ's presence,  
**invite** people into a growing relationship with Jesus,  
and **equip** them to **serve** in a broken world.

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## Senior Pastor

*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

So much mission was going on at Desert Cross in 2024 it was hard to keep up! It was a year of embodying our desire to be a neighborhood church responding with open eyes, ears, hands, and hearts to meet the needs of people locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. Desert Cross was celebrated by the Grand Canyon Synod as a top generous congregation locally with our mission dollars and by Lutheran World Hunger as a top generous congregation in the world. Our weekly Hunger Jar makes a difference helping with hunger and disaster relief locally and globally all thanks to your generosity! We worship and share our offerings in thanksgiving to God which is tied to the meal of the Eucharist where we receive God's gifts that sustain us in the bread and wine. What a beautiful meal of love we share each week together!

That meal fuels us with forgiveness, love, and grace sending us out in the Spirit to do God's work in the world. 2024 was a very special year because we celebrated our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary which marked the 10 year anniversary as your pastor at Desert Cross.! We gave thanks to God for 40 years of mission and ministry with a very special celebration of community at our Tempe campus with a delicious meal, yard games (my first game of Yard Yahtzee with Denise McClellan was a blast!), and a special worship service, "Scripture, Songs, & Stories." Special guests and musicians from both campuses blessed our time together with a full sanctuary as pastors past and present shared stories about Desert Cross. We had a missional component to our celebration as we do with every ministry. In order to honor our tradition of mission and service, we launched a 3<sup>rd</sup> annual mission challenge in 2024 with the "Serve 40" challenge, asking each person to serve 40 hours in 2024, and we achieved our goal! What a great way to celebrate the last 40 years that launches us into the next 40 years and beyond of mission and ministry together. Time flies!

As we flew through 2024 we made some changes to adapt to our changing world and to set us up for the future in this changing world. We focused on faithful innovation being guided by the Holy Spirit. We set it up with our Christ Care Retreat, *Tomorrow's Church Today*, to kick start our process of how we will both adapt and innovate to meet the new realities we face as we follow a certain God in an uncertain time. Our goals of being a neighborhood church are being developed and becoming a reality. The council engaged in conversations over 2024 with Family Promise regarding stewarding our vacant property at the Tempe campus to build a micro-village for step-up housing. As this possibility is being investigated, we are excited to share the details in 2025 as a beautiful way to meet the number one need in our community which is affordable housing.

I set our 2025 weekly staff theme as "Be Thankful." At every staff meeting, we each share what we are thankful for in the moment. We have so much to be thankful for at Desert Cross. A lot of mission, service and fellowship happened at both campuses throughout the year. I am especially thankful for each one of you and all you do to serve God through our faith community. Thank you for your time, your creativity, your leadership, and most of all for the way you share your faith with us and the community. Your support is meaningful, and you are making a difference with God's love.

Rejoice, pray, give thanks!

*Pastor Andrea*

# ***PASTORAL MEMBERSHIP RECORDS AND STATISTICS***

## ***Members Received***

### **Transferred to DCLC from other ELCA Churches (4)**

Leland Johnson	Janet Johnson	Becky Vernon
Sonia Barber		

### **Transferred to DCLC from other Lutheran Churches**

### **Members Received by Affirmation of Baptism (2)**

Harry Woelzlein	Karen Woelzlein
-----------------	-----------------

### **Members Received as an Associate**

### **Members Received by Adult Baptism (1)**

Edgar Perez

### **Members Received by Child Baptism (7)**

Gretta Belle Luna	Cormick Reid Chapman	Wesley John Grover
Emily Elizabeth Etzold	James Cyrus Tainter	Theodore Graham Jauch
Briggs Thomas Finch		

### **Affirmation of Baptism (6)**

Dale Pfau	Maisie Ostapuk	Harrison Reshetar
Michael Wilson	Leanna Ihlefeld	Harper Hunsaker

### **Weddings (\*Denotes non-members)**

Membership	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Baptized	888	763	735	755	769
Confirmed	712	634	614	618	624
Households	433	384	369	370	362

## ***Members Released/Transferred***

### **Transferred to ELCA Churches (1)**

Deborah Hutterer

### **Transferred to other Lutheran Churches**

### **Transferred to other Churches (1)**

Michael Scott Mahaney

### **Requested Removal**

### **Transferred to Inactive (2)**

Gaylord Harter

Linda Harter

### **Deaths (10)**

Rosemary Wilson

Jackie Jones

David Lars Friesth

Cynthia Wilkinson

Betty Andersen

John Proescholdt

Carol C. Frericks

Dean Lundholm

Wallace Amundson

Lyn Belisle

### **Funerals (\*Denotes non-members) (14)**

Rosemary Wilson

\*Henry David Knauer

Wallace Amundson

Betty Andersen

Cynthia Wilkinson

Fred Gilbert

Jackie Jones

David Lars Friesth

Lyn Belisle

\*Alan Garlington

Janet Steinhauer McCarthy

John Proescholdt

Carol C. Frericks

\*A. Michael Brown

Tempe Attendance	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Average Sunday	N/A	189	185	190	184
Average Sunday - Virtual	774*	298*	172*	129	121
Ash Wednesday	N/A	N/A	125	127	105
Maundy Thursday	N/A	N/A	126	89	80
Good Friday	N/A	N/A	103	93	107
Easter	N/A	223	308	362	330
Christmas Eve	N/A	288	318	343	327

\* Calculation per ELCA Guidelines.

Gilbert Attendance	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Average with Easter and Christmas	N/A	81	126	124	122
Ave Sunday (without Easter and Christmas)	-	-	-	119	117
Ash Wednesday	N/A	N/A	68	67	78
Maundy Thursday	N/A	N/A	89	101	45
Good Friday	N/A	N/A	N/A	105	64
Easter	N/A	125	217	240	238
Christmas Eve	N/A	179	211	258	262

Note: 2021 Worship data is for 39 weeks, not 52.

## Associate Pastor

*"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with my victorious right hand." – Isaiah 41:10*

Greetings! This past summer, my 8-year son, Lincoln, and I embarked on an epic 18-hour road trip to Kansas City to watch our beloved Chicago Cubs take on the Kansas City Royals for two games. Along the way we saw endless grain elevators marking the entrance from one rural town to the next. We watched an orange moon cast and eerie but beautiful light over Nebraskan cornfields. I listened to a superb book that brought me both laughs and tears. Lincoln and I devoured more delicious snacks than I would like to admit. As I look back on 2024, it feels like an incredible road trip. Lots of great detours, wonderful memories and of course time gathered together around food. Here are some of my highlights:

I brought a group of high school youth to Flagstaff for a mission trip last summer. A huge thanks to Angela Nannenga and Kerry Wilson for helping chaperone the trip. We had a fantastic week of serving at food pantries, preparing meals at soup kitchens, restored park trails to their natural habitat and painted and cleaned up a woman's shelter. We also had time to explore a mile long cave and wander through downtown Flagstaff. Another huge thanks to the congregation for "purchasing stock". The youth loved sending postcards to members of the congregation updating them on their Flagstaff adventures.

At the Gilbert campus we completed the three goals we set back in 2023 at a meeting of twenty congregational leaders. In 2024, a group from Desert Cross set up a booth at the Gilbert Global Village Festival to share about our church. Multiple families hosted fellowship events as an opportunity to get to know one another better. Lastly, we formed a committee that is leading a refresh of the worship and fellowship space at the Gilbert campus. That committee has already shared possible plans for stage one. We enjoyed a couple of first-time events at the Gilbert campus. We sang together at a hymn-sing in April, and our choir put on a beautiful cantata in December. Neither of these events would have happened with the faithful leadership of Carolyn Perkins.

For the first time since I arrived, we hosted a ChristCare retreat. Around 50 of us gathered over two days using Faithful Innovation to guide our conversation. The retreat was titled "Tomorrow's Church Today". Together we explored how we can be a church that listens to our neighbors and then explored ways to serve our neighbors. The engaging conversation, hearty meals and thoughtful worship were a blessing.

In October and November, I led a Bible Study on the Gospel of Luke on Wednesday nights. We ate delightful potluck meals, shared fellowship and then became experts on the gospel of Luke. The Bible Study was full of engaging questions and insights. I came away amazed at the large number of biblical scholars we have within our congregation. There will be more bible studies to come in 2025.

The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration was a great success. The meal in the community center surrounded by pictures and a timeline of Desert Cross' history followed by the hymn sing were high notes for me. It was great to meet Desert Cross' founding Pastor John Propst in person and hear some of the OG Desert Cross stories. The gathering was a poignant reminder of the Spirit's movement throughout Desert Cross.

2024 was a wonderful road trip thanks to all of you and our ever-faithful DCLC staff. I look forward to all the adventures and snacks that 2025 will hold!

Peace,

*Pastor Thadd*

## **Council President**

As we gather to reflect on the year we have had as a community of faith, I find myself reflecting on the joys, challenges, and experiences that have brought us closer together as both a congregation and as Lutherans. We have explored new ideas, made difficult decisions, and embarked into new territories together. As we head into the new year, I pray that we commemorate where we've been and enthusiastically look to the future.

For two days in February, Desert Cross had a Christ Care retreat where around 50 members explored the concept of "Tomorrow's Church Today". The retreat focused on discussing the future of the church, with members reflecting on how they can continue to grow in faith and service. That focus became the center of our strategic plan goals for the year. With that focus in mind, the council began exploring the possibility of a partnership with Family Promise, an organization that helps families facing homelessness secure stable housing through safe shelter, caring connections, and building a community of support. Additionally, we opened our campuses to new organizations and groups including "Primer Schools" at the Tempe campus. We are continuing to explore ways to work as God's hands in our own communities, servicing the ever-changing demands of the world.

Another important role of Desert Cross has always been mission and outreach. In 2024 we sent the youth on a mission trip to Flagstaff, something that population has been missing for some time. This was a transformative trip that brought youth together to serve and connect with the Flagstaff community, strengthening both faith and fellowship for our teens. At our Gilbert campus we hosted our annual "Trunk or Treat", a beloved community outreach event that provided a safe and fun Halloween experience for families. All year Desert Cross participated in our "Serve 40 challenge", fulfilling hundreds of hours of community service and outreach in our community. Our own quilters fulfilled this challenge by creating, blessing, and sending 330 quilts to Lutheran World Relief. Perhaps most importantly to our mission and vision, through our hunger jar initiative, we were able to give away a significant amount of funds, in addition to our already budgeted support for Synod Benevolence, demonstrating our commitment to both local and global mission work.

But it is not only service to our community that makes Desert Cross special, it is also our service to one another. In 2024 we hosted another successful summer of Vacation Bible School. This energetic and faith-filled week touches the lives of many families, even those that are not members of our congregation. It always amazes me how many children walk about with a newfound love and understanding of Jesus through valuable biblical lessons, memorable activities, and lasting friendships. Additionally, throughout the year, both campuses hosted multiple events that inspired others to worship God through music! The Gilbert campus hosted their first hymn sing, a celebration of music and worship that brought members together to lift their voices in praise, creating a joyful atmosphere for all ages. The Tempe campus hosted the Gilbert Town Fiddlers including our own young member for a fiddle concert, bringing many to our campus to hear the upbeat, lively tunes. Both campuses offered a meditation of Easter and Christmas through cantatas. Each offered beautiful, moving performances that captured the essence of the seasons, reflecting the core messages of Easter and Christmas through song.

One of the most direct blessings we have at Desert Cross is a robust, innovative staff. I praise God in the hiring of our new Director of Youth Ministry, Ms. Tessa Faust. Tessa came with a deep understanding of Lutheran theology and a commitment to supporting our youth in their faith journeys through conversation, study, and fellowship. We also hired a new Office Manager, Mrs. Wendy Williams! Wendy has jumped in feet first and has already proven herself to be an asset to our staff in just a few weeks' time! Even after the loss of our Music Director, we prayerfully and joyously welcomed Joni Van Rossum as our Director of Worship and Media Arts!



We praise God for the immense blessing he has been to our church. And, although they may not be staff, I celebrate the immense gift of our council and chamber members who work tirelessly to pray, listen, and discern for the benefit of our community. While difficult staffing decisions were made, the council admirably fulfilled their duties of listening to the needs of our congregation and striving to make the best of difficult situations. Thank you for your exceptional teamwork and expertise.

Looking back on the past year, it has been a pleasure to see the strides and accomplishments of Desert Cross. With gratitude for the past and excitement for the future, I am humbled to walk alongside you in our next adventures.

Yours in Christ,

*Anna Sion*  
Council President

**Annual Meeting**  
**February 25, 2024**  
Minutes reconstructed by Doug Bjotvedt  
Start Time: 1:02 PM  
End Time: 1:53 PM

A quorum has been reached.

Welcome: Angela Nannenga

Motion to approve agenda. Approved

Please show kindness and respect to each other and know that we can disagree, but do so in a respectful manner.

Procedural plans for questions and voting with delays for livestream to catch up are established.

Opening Prayer: Pastor Andrea

Annual Report: Brent Borchers

Income was 98% of what we expected. The General Fund was \$213,000 less than budgeted, an area of concern moving forward. Rent was much higher than anticipated.

Visuals were also presented in pie chart rather than financial columns. Majority of gifts go to the General Fund.

Fortunately, expenses, like income, were close to budget and were \$16,000 away from an over-run budget. The variance was a loss of \$46,000, which we will talk about more later.

Visuals were also presented in pie chart rather than financial columns. The majority of expenses being payroll.

From an income and expense approach, we were short \$46,886. But fortunately, the government came forward with additional money from the CARES Act in 2023. There is a question if this money would be available in 2024 and we don't know; we didn't know it would be available in 2023. So, the guess is No, but fortunately we were able to apply and receive \$98,350 to keep people employed during the pandemic and get the operating loss to net income of \$51,464.

The balance sheet shows a lot of activity going on, but I want to point out that the unrestricted funds was negative \$70,000 and we managed to reduce that down to a negative \$36,000. This is a positive but an area of concern moving forward with difficult conversations to have in the future. All in all our cash position has improved.

Our liabilities, all in all, probably right where we thought we would be. We did increase our debt with a loan to replace the A/C's, replaced some and have funds on hand for others as needed.

Talking about contributions, we are almost back to where we were before the pandemic. Almost back. But look back these last 5 years and think about costs back then vs. now.

Am I concerned about this, you can say that talents and gifts follow the church and they can make the concern less, but difficult decisions might need to be made if the gifts don't follow.

Looking at the Endowment, there were withdrawals of \$25,000 but a change in value of \$48,000 plus additions of \$20,000. This is independent money from what we are discussing here and it is in a whole separate account.

Looking at RENEW, we had a little bit left over expenses from 2022 that were \$1,500 and we have a little over \$22,000 to look at for additional projects.

Motion made by Laura Clark and seconded by Stan Fernandes to approve the financials and will open it up to questions.

Tracy Clark question on the details on the Mission and Outreach number in the variance report. Answers can be found on page 16 which is mostly Hunger Jars.

Vote Financials – Approved.

Financial Update: Brent

Real brief, just one slide. January income and expenses were close. This is the time we see gifts come in but the summer is low and we will look at this moving forward in May.

Special Projects: Angela

Many wonderful things at Desert Cross.

1<sup>st</sup> item is Together at the Desert which is being developed with Joni and Angela to reach more people in the community to use our facilities. Here is the rough draft.

2<sup>nd</sup> item is Instagram account. Ariane and Joni are working on this to get our faith community connected to the public around us.

3<sup>rd</sup> item is Desert Cross Serves. Desert Cross members can volunteer with other non-profit organizations in the East Valley. There was a goal to serve 1,000 hours in the year, but we reached that in two months. For this year, we are trying to get members to serve 40 hours within our community and so far, 6 members have reached that goal.

4<sup>th</sup> item is ChristCare Retreat. First retreat since the pandemic where Pastors lead discussions on interacting with our community and better serve those around us. So far, 12 people have signed up.

5<sup>th</sup> items is the Cops and Kids Holiday Event. We participated in the 2023 Cops and Kids Holiday event to have a child go shopping with a police officer get shoes, warm close plus a toy for the holidays. Our hunger jar raised \$1250 for six families to go shopping. The Sheriff was so impressed with our generosity that he called the church to thank us. So, give yourself a round of applause.

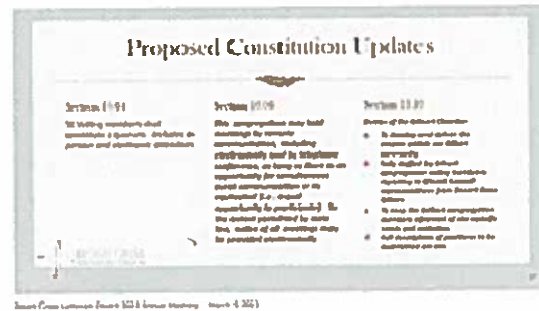
6<sup>th</sup> item is the Gilbert Hymn Sing. This will serve as a fundraiser for our Gilbert location and both communities will sing. There will be a drop box for people to indicate which songs they would like song and a potluck dinner to follow on that night.

7<sup>th</sup> item is the Youth Group Committee. Reminder that Katelyn stepped down from her position to focus on her health. We approached parent volunteers to support the ministry and put a committee together to see what that ministry should look like.

An extra item is our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We already mentioned members are encouraged to serve 40 hours and we started our 40 years/40 weeks/40 stories.

#### Constitution Updates: Agenda

Review of the updates were approved at our Elections meeting and sent off to Synod for approval.



Unfortunately, the Synod lost track of our requests. We resubmitted and verified receipt. The updates will be reviewed and voted on at the March 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. We will follow up with making sure we are on the Agenda and a Vote is taken. We will follow up after March 16<sup>th</sup> and send out an eblast to let the congregation know the results.

Council has been discussing that the idea of going to two congregational meetings per year down from three – eliminating this Annual meeting. We will ensure that all the topics will be adequately addressed at the Budget meeting in December and the Elections meeting which would move up from April to become the new Annual meeting. We feel this change would better facilitate participation as we have had some issues in attaining a quorum in the past.

Want to emphasize that the vote today is only to explore the idea of going to two meetings. In order for this to be approved, an amendment to the constitution would be necessary. As we move forward with this we will maintain transparency and follow the constitution on making amendments.

Motion made by Angela Borchers and seconded by Michelle Reaban to explore transitioning to two congregational meetings and will open it up to questions.

Don Legacy question about split of the agendas for three meetings to two. Nothing has been defined, but thinking nominations at the Budget Meeting and Elections at the Annual meeting which would be combination of the Annual and Election meetings as they are now. Follow up question and reiteration of the answer that the two meetings would be combined with the correct wording.

Tracy Clark question about his correct hearing that nothing is going away, its just getting redistributed to different times. Just to be clear. Yes, everything will be covered.

Vote Two Congregational Meeting – Approved.

Nominating Committee: Tom Rewolinski

Seeking five members to join Tom on this committee.

Looking to fill positions on Council, Chamber, and Endowment. These are three-year commitments.

If interested in open positions, reach out to Tom and/or Council President email.

Positions on Council:

- Vice President – which is Vice President, President, and Past President during the three-year commitment.
- Treasure – Brent already nominated through council appointment in December.
- Secretary.
- Two Tempe at large members.
- One Gilbert at large member.

Positions on Gilbert Chamber:

- Facilities.
- Finance and Stewardship.
- Mission and Outreach.

Positions on Endowment:

- Three Members.

Tom is leading the committee and the purpose here is to find the other five members.

A brief conversation about timelines and what the members of the committee do before the election meetings.

Brief conversation about when the new terms start after the election.

Tom Rewolinski	Michelle Reaban
Stan Fernandes	Haley Brinkman
Tom Selby	Brent Nannenga

Synod Assembly: Angela

Date and theme for Synod assembly was discussed and the need for two female and two male delegates.

Conversation about what it means to go to assembly and what is done at assembly:

Tom Rewolinski	Liz Rewolinski
Ellen Minde	(need another male delegate)

Overall question session before close.

Don Legacy question and conversation about Chamber nomination and elections in the constitution.

Ariane Nannenga questions and conversations about parents leading youth gatherings and how conversations might not flow smoothly or comfortably.

Closing Prayer – Pastor Thadd

Angela adjourned the meeting.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Elections Meeting

May 5, 2024

Minutes by Haley Brinkmann-Perez

Start Time: 1:03 PM

End Time: 1:48PM

Reached a quorum- quorum has been reached.

Welcome: Angela Nannenga  
Motion to approve agenda. Approved  
Opening Prayer: Pastor Andrea

Financial update: Brent Borchers.

Goes over where we stand year to date. \$32,000 defecate as of now. The finance committee will start to prepare for 2025. Brent mentioned that there are quite a few tough decisions going forward for project updates and the finance committee is planning ahead.

### Questions:

Dawn Collins- What kind of maintenance are we looking at?  
-Landscaping and parking lot at both campuses.

Jean O'Donnell - Council and leadership should create a report about all maintenance and future project updates that council is looking into updating for both campuses. These items should be listed in writing and given to the congregation.

Laura Clark: People are likely to donate to something tangible.

If members knew of the needs of the church they may be more than willing to write a check for what updates are needed.

Suggested that the council needs to start looking to hire a new youth director.

### Elections:

Angela Thanks the Nominating committee for all of their hard work!

Angela goes over positions to be elected Council, Gilbert Chamber, and Endowment Committee.

Motion to proceed with election with all candidates?  
Motion approves and voting begins.

### Project Updates:

Fiddler Concert Music: Ministry raised \$278.  
Hymn Sing- Carolyn Perkins organized a Hymn sing. The proceeds went to the Gilbert refresh campaign and raised \$1,266.

Joey's Java- Money that will be raised will go towards the general fund.

Little Free Library- Installing a little free library at the Gilbert campus. Grand opening is in May. The goal is to have a little free library at the Tempe Campus as well.

Feed My Starving Children : 77 individuals participated. Participants were able to pack food to feed about 61 children for a year!

The Hunger Jar for the month of April raised \$3,000 and the proceeds went to Feed My Starving Children.

Director of youth ministries: The position is now open and posted on multiple hiring sites. The goal is to have someone starting in August.

Constitution updates: Changes to the constitution were voted and approved by the Synod. There is an updated copy of changes in the office.

### Questions:

Don Legacy- Constitution has sections listed but are actually "chapters".

Elections Results- Angela announces the results

Votes are as follows:

59 Katie Toasperm	58 Brent Borchers
58 Marie Ihlefeld	59 Vicki English
61 Gail Dempsey	58 Mari Johnson
58 Jean O'Donnell	58 Gary Balliet
58 Joe Weingartz	49 Terry Kaiser-Borning
51 Mike McClellan	17 Bob Auer

Thank you's to all retiring from Council (Haley Brinkmann-Perez, Adam Pfau, and Tom R)

Closing Prayer: Pastor Thadd

Adjournment - Motion to adjourn- passes.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Budget Meeting**

**December 8, 2024**

**Minutes taken by: Marie Ihlefeld**

**Start Time: 1:03 PM**

**End Time: 1:43 PM**

Reached a quorum – quorum has been reached

Welcome: Anna Sion

Thank you to all of you for attending.

Ice Breaker Activity: Talk to someone near you & discuss what you are grateful for at Desert Cross. Carolyn Perkins shared that she is grateful for warm-heartedness & kindness. Like a 2nd family. Other members shared they are grateful for community.

Anna announced the 2025 Budget was created thoughtfully and prayerfully starting around 3 months ago.

Lots of emotions around the budget, let's extend grace to one another in conversation. Remember Ephesians 4:2: "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." Please raise your hand and state your name before asking a question.

Opening Prayer: Pastor Andrea

Brent Borchers: Financial Update

Broke down income side November 2023 to November 2024. We received \$93,000 in Cares Act money last year...

We received \$195,000 in income in December 2023. \$1.2 or \$1.3 million in total revenue.

We will not make up the \$80,000 difference in income versus expenses this year, even if we receive \$195,000 in December 2024.

An agreement of separation was signed by Daniel Decker. He is receiving his salary until the end of February 2025.

Desert Cross Lutheran Church					
2025 Budget					
Revenue			Expenses		
Pledges	137	\$ 602,868	Payroll	\$	735,433
Prev Pledgers (not received yet)	10	\$ 22,340	Administration	\$	234,600
Anticipated Non-pledged Giving		\$ 208,775	Mortgage/Debt Reduction	\$	100,800
Facility rental revenue		\$ 121,500	Maintenance and Repair	\$	42,250
Other		\$ 27,300	Ministry	\$	36,050
Niche		\$ 11,250	Synod Benevolence	\$	60,000
Other Faith Contributions		\$ 262,000	Outreach	\$	45,900
<b>Total Revenue</b>		<b>\$ 1,256,033</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,256,033</b>
			2024 Budget	\$	1,326,474
			2023 Budget	\$	1,232,100
			2022 Budget	\$	1,148,000

Decreases in HR expenses and staff are proposed.

Cost of Living Adjustments for Pastors and salaried staff. \$9,000 total increase for Pastors & 2.5% increase for salaried staff.

No longer representing the Gilbert location as an expense in the budget as it is a part of Desert Cross Lutheran Church. Thus, one revenue and expenses for all of Desert Cross.

Parish Nurse budget increase for defibrillators and training. The defibrillators and training are already paid for by an anonymous member donor.

Decrease of \$75,000 for Payroll.

Children's Ministry increase due to cost increases for Vacation Bible School.

Shooting for \$1.2 to \$1.3million total. \$1.256 million for 2025 budget.

Received ~\$160,000 in rent for 2024. \$121,000 in rent is expected for 2025.

Spirit of Joy's rent was less than \$20,000 per year.

Maintenance and Repair Budget does not have a lot of big-ticket items. Cost expectations roughly \$27,000 – \$30,000 for the Gilbert Parking Lot. Especially large ticket maintenance items are not included in the budget. We rely on special giving for these efforts.

Questions:

Jim Buhr: What is the Facility rental revenue?

- Elementary School rent is ~\$60,000 per year
- Dog for Vets rent is ~\$32,000 per year
- Preschool rent is ~\$30,000 per year.
- Special events also bring in rental income.

Jim Buhr: In consolidating Gilbert & Tempe it is important we don't get surprised by spending more at one site than the other. Does Council have these numbers?

How do we decide what income and expenses get attributed to which site? The numbers don't reflect what has happened. Only time sheets would solve this & take too much time away from the staff. We have members from both campuses on council.

Jim Buhr: We stretch our Pastors too thin taking care of 2 campuses. We need to be cognitive of the fact that they are stretched thin.

Greg Beatty: What is required to get Tempe landscaping up to code? Are we paying fines to the city?

Possibly above \$100,000 to fix Tempe landscaping.

We have not been fined. We are required to have a minimum number of plants on the property. We must get a landscape architect.

Pam King: What is the situation with the music director? Will Joni do this, he is busy with IT.

Joni is currently the Interim Music Leader

Budget Vote: Online Voting  
Motion to Vote on 2025 Budget:  
First: Allen Ihlefeld  
Second: Carolyn Perkins

The 2025 Budget was unanimously approved.

Closing Prayer: Pastor Thadd

Anna Sion adjourned the meeting.

## Financial Review

On December 3, 2023, the congregation approved a balanced budget for 2024 in the amount of \$1,326,474 which was an increase of 8% over the previous year.

In the following variance report, you will see the budget was underfunded by \$44,000 with total revenues and total expenses being 97% and 96% respectively. Still, we managed to end the year with a net operating revenue of \$5,014.

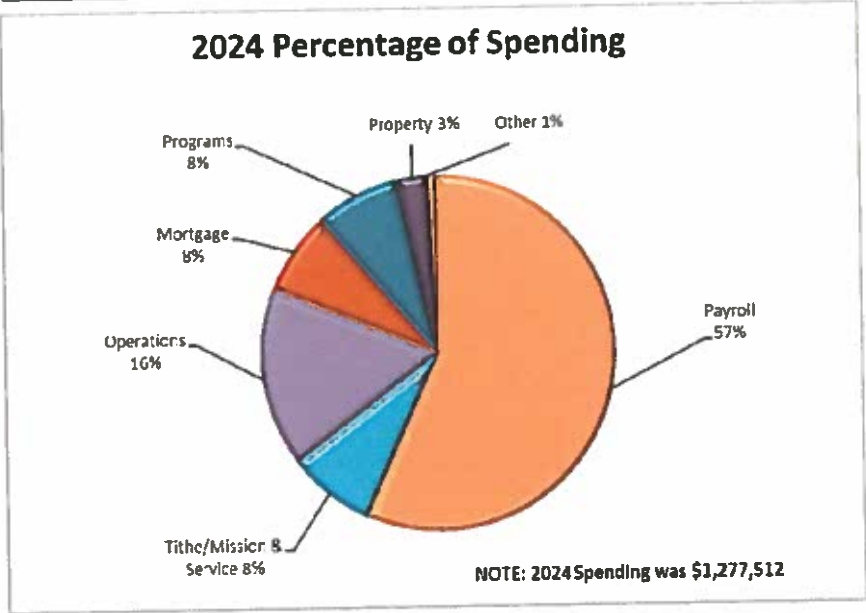
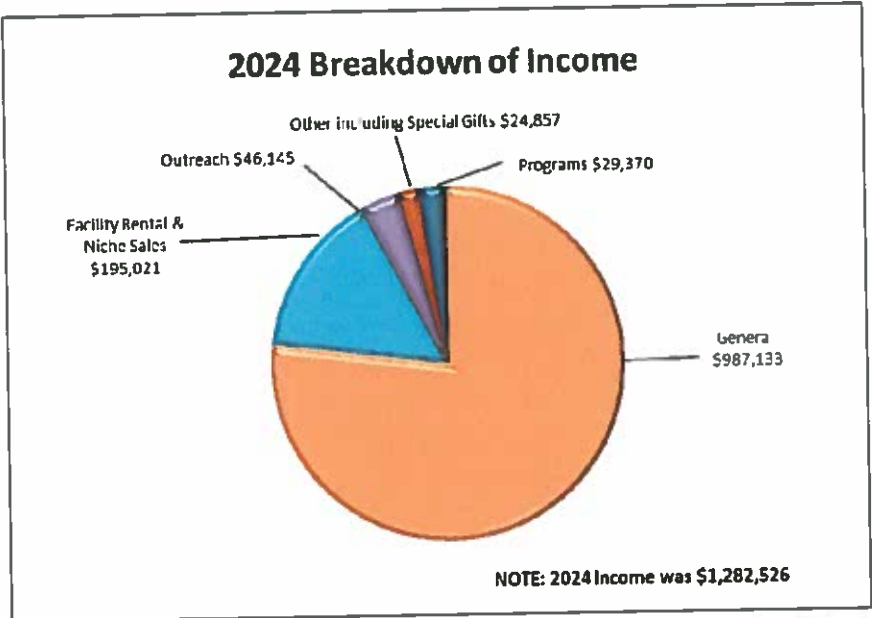
Desert Cross Lutheran Church Income and Expense for 2024 Variance Actual to Budget				
Accounts	Actual	Budget	Variance	%
<b>REVENUES</b>				
Contributions				
General Fund	\$ 987,133	\$ 1,211,424	\$ (224,291)	
Sub-total Contributions	\$ 987,133	\$ 1,211,424	\$ (224,291)	81%
Other Revenue				
Faith and Carry-Over	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Facility Rental	\$ 186,865	\$ 76,500	\$ 110,365	
Memorial Garden	\$ 8,156	\$ 11,250	\$ (3,094)	
Programs and Worship Revenue	\$ 29,370	\$ -	\$ 29,370	
Mission and Outreach	\$ 46,145	\$ -	\$ 46,145	
Other	\$ 24,857	\$ 27,300	\$ (2,443)	
Sub-total Revenues	\$ 295,393	\$ 115,050	\$ 180,343	257%
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 1,282,526</b>	<b>\$ 1,326,474</b>	<b>\$ (43,948)</b>	<b>97%</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
Accounts	Actual	Budget	Variance	%
Payroll and Benefits	\$ 725,820	\$ 810,874	\$ (85,054)	
Operations	\$ 208,199	\$ 173,250	\$ 34,949	
Mortgages (Debt Reduction)	\$ 97,732	\$ 100,800	\$ (3,068)	
Synod Benevolence	\$ 60,200	\$ 60,000	\$ 200	
Programs	\$ 98,100	\$ 106,050	\$ (7,950)	
Outreach	\$ 41,759	\$ 38,250	\$ 3,509	
Maintenance and Repair	\$ 36,913	\$ 37,250	\$ (337)	
Other	\$ 8,788	\$ -	\$ 8,788	
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 1,277,512</b>	<b>\$ 1,326,474</b>	<b>\$ (48,962)</b>	<b>96%</b>
<b>NET REVENUES OVER EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 5,014</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 5,014</b>	

Below, you will see a table showing the history of contributions for Desert Cross. You will note that General Fund giving has remained relatively flat while Other giving has been growing each year and providing a tremendous lift to our financials – the largest area of growth has been in rental income.

5 - Year Contribution and Income History					
Contributions	2020*	2021*	2022	2023*	2024
General	\$ 992,884	\$ 1,023,904	\$ 950,351	\$ 941,917	\$ 987,133
Other	\$ 83,795	\$ 120,240	\$ 163,657	\$ 259,387	\$ 295,393
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,076,679</b>	<b>\$1,144,144</b>	<b>\$1,114,008</b>	<b>\$1,201,304</b>	<b>\$1,282,526</b>

\* Does not include the Extraordinary Income from the C.A.R.E.S. Act of 2020, 2021, and 2023

For those who prefer graphs over tables, I have broken out the incomes and expenses in these two pie graphs.





The Balance Sheet is referred to as the Statement of Financial Position in non-profit accounting and balances Assets against Liabilities and Fund Principal (known as Owner's Equity in the for-profit sector).

Desert Cross Lutheran Church Statement of Financial Position			
	2024	2023	
Assets			
Cash and Cash Equivalents			
Unrestricted	\$ (71,494)	\$ (36,091)	
ELCA Loan Fund	\$ 27,311	\$ 27,311	
Operational Reserve Fund	\$ 22,235	\$ 22,235	
Designated Funds	\$ 157,443	\$ 120,765	
Mission Fund Account	\$ 981	\$ 972	
Brokerages	\$ 500	\$ 500	
RENEW Restricted	\$ 22,801	\$ 22,801	
<b>Total Cash and Cash Equivalents</b>	<b>\$ 159,776</b>	<b>\$ 158,493</b>	
Fixed Assets			
Land	\$ 1,403,900	\$ 1,403,900	
Buildings	\$ 3,793,242	\$ 3,793,242	
Capital Improvements	\$ 951,299	\$ 951,299	
Equipment	\$ 127,195	\$ 127,195	
Office Equipment	\$ 37,759	\$ 37,759	
Office Furniture	\$ 19,421	\$ 19,421	
Furnishings	\$ 33,372	\$ 33,372	
Music Equipment	\$ 35,194	\$ 35,194	
Audio Visual Equipment	\$ 176,697	\$ 176,697	
Accumulated Depreciation	\$ (3,698,507)	\$ (3,581,116)	
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>\$ 2,879,572</b>	<b>\$ 2,996,964</b>	
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 3,039,349</b>	<b>\$ 3,155,456</b>	
	2024	2023	
Liabilities, Fund Principal, & Restricted Funds			
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Security Deposit for Facility Rental	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	
Prepaid Facility Rent	\$ -	\$ 21,000	
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 1,000</b>	<b>\$ 22,000</b>	
Long-Term Liabilities			
Notes Payable - ELCA Credit Union	\$ 56,661	\$ 72,161	
Notes Payable - Mission Investment Fund	\$ 834,359	\$ 892,250	
<b>Total Long-Term Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 891,019</b>	<b>\$ 964,411</b>	
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 892,019</b>	<b>\$ 986,411</b>	
Fund Principal			
Fund Principal	\$ 2,147,330	\$ 2,169,045	
<b>Total Fund Principal</b>	<b>\$ 2,147,330</b>	<b>\$ 2,169,045</b>	
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES, FUND PRINCIPAL</b>	<b>\$ 3,039,349</b>	<b>\$ 3,155,456</b>	

The restricted cash of \$157,443 is offsetting the General Fund which is (\$71,494) and is comprised of 30 designated funds such as, but not limited to, tenant security deposits, land sale proceeds, bequeathed gifts, grants, and specific ministry support.

The Mission Fund Account and Brokerages are current balances in accounts used for processing non-cash contributions such as stocks and certificates of deposits. The ELCA Loan Fund is the unspent balance on the loan secured to replace broken A/C units in 2023 and is held for those that will need to be replaced.

Finally, the remaining cash asset of \$22,801 is that of the RENEW Campaign which concluded in May of 2020. The details for the available RENEW gifts is displayed on the next page.

Of the total income of \$1,282,526, Desert Cross gave \$101,959 (approximately 8%) beyond the walls of our church buildings.

Our largest contribution was \$60,200 in Benevolence to the Grand Canyon Synod and our Mission & Service includes:

Special Hunger Jars and Disaster Relief	\$ 22,627
ELCA World Hunger	\$ 9,334
Lutheran Social Services SW	\$ 3,000
Lutheran Campus Ministries	\$ 2,500
Grace Pancake Breakfast	\$ 2,250
Service General	\$ 771
Pacific Luther Seminary	\$ 1,000
I-Help	\$ 278
Total	\$ 41,759

In addition to the above, an Endowment Fund was established in June of 2000 "...to enhance the mission outreach of Desert Cross apart from the general operations of the congregation."

This Fund is privately managed by the Mission Investment Fund, a financial ministry of the ELCA located in Chicago that sets its own value based on several publicly traded funds on the open market.

This Fund is not part of the financials of Desert Cross and does not appear on our statements. A committee serves as stewards of this Fund and reviews grant and scholarship requests throughout the year. Terry Kaiser Borning serves as Chair of the Endowment Committee, and his detailed report beyond the following summary can be found on page 29.

<b>ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust</b>		
<b>Desert Cross Mission Endowment Fund</b>		
Beginning Balance (Close of Business 12-31-2023)	\$	551,375
Additions	\$	21,693
Withdrawals	\$	(20,000)
Reinvested - Fund A	\$	-
Change in Value	\$	39,367
Ending Balance (Close of Business 12-31-2024)	\$	592,435

The RENEW Campaign, a 3-year campaign, concluded in May of 2020. There were two components to the campaign - RENEW Home (to address deferred maintenance) and RENEW Mission (10% of the campaign to be shared outside the walls of Desert Cross).

Actual gifts received were \$360,000 of the \$375,000 pledged which equates to 96% of pledges being received - further testament to the generous support of, and commitment to, Desert Cross Lutheran Church.

No projects were planned for 2024, and the ending balances are displayed below.

RENEW Campaign	
June 2017 - May 2020	
Pledged Amount	\$ 374,697.00
Amount Received (96% of Pledge)	\$ 360,249.00
Remaining RENEW Balance on 01/01/2024	\$ 22,801.00
Gifts Available as of 12/31/2024	
RENEW Home	RENEW Mission
\$ 12,095.00	\$ 10,706.00

## Audit Report

February 6, 2025

Church Council  
Desert Cross Lutheran Church  
8600 S McClintock Drive  
Tempe, AZ 85284

The church audit committee applied agreed upon accounting procedures to the accounting books and records of Desert Cross Lutheran Church as of December 31, 2023.

All information included in these accounting records is the responsibility of the management of Desert Cross Lutheran Church.

Our procedures were performed based on the recommendation of the Treasurer of the ELCA. The information subjected to a limited sampling of the general accounting within the church, including the process and procedures involved with cash receipts, accounts payable and vouchers, bank reconciliations, member contributions and pledges, payroll and withholding tax, and general insurance coverage.

The church audit committee members, John Christiansen, Glen Gabrielson, and I are pleased with the records we reviewed and the documentation that supported them. There are no significant findings to report to management. I appreciate the time and work of our audit committee members and Deanna Soll and Doug Bjotvedt.

Sincerely,

*Lauren Farrell*

Church Audit Committee Chair

CC: Doug Bjotvedt

## **Worship and Media Arts**

What a year it has been! As I reflect on 2024, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for all that we've accomplished together at Desert Cross. This has been a year of growth, innovation, and collaboration—one that has strengthened our worship experiences and expanded our ability to connect with our community, both in person and online.

In my former role as **Director of Media Production** for the majority of last year, I focused on refining our **live streaming, audio/visual systems, and digital presence** to ensure that every worship service, special event, and online engagement was as meaningful as possible. Then, in the latter part of the year, I had the honor of stepping into the role of **Interim Music Leader**—a challenge that has truly been a blessing. The past months have been filled with deepened relationships, musical collaboration, and a renewed vision for the future of our worship ministry.

### **Accomplishments in Worship & Music Ministry**

#### **Building a Stronger Worship Community**

- Reintroduced Song Leaders in Tempe to enhance congregational singing, with overwhelming enthusiasm from our choir and congregation.
- Began the process of implementing Song Leaders in Gilbert as well.
- Led weekly choir rehearsals with renewed energy and vision, welcoming back familiar faces and engaging new volunteers.
- Strengthened coordination between worship leaders and musicians to create a more unified worship experience.

#### **Special Music Events & Worship Enhancements**

- Successfully planned and led our Christmas Cantata with live accompaniment from talented musicians.
- Arranged and customized new music for our bands and choir, ensuring that every piece supported the worship themes and was accessible for the congregation.
- Tuned and maintained pianos at both campuses to ensure quality sound for all worship services.
- Worked alongside Keziah and other musicians to enhance Gilbert's worship experience through improved equipment and leadership.

### **Advancing Media & Technology**

#### **Live Streaming & AV Upgrades**

- Optimized our **livestream setup** to achieve an uninterrupted streaming experience.
- Resolved connectivity and technical issues at both campuses, ensuring smooth online and in-person experiences.
- **Upgraded the sound system** in Gilbert, implementing a new soundboard, new mics, and training volunteers to use them.
- Continued **AV volunteer recruitment and training** to ensure consistency in our technical ministry.

#### **Social Media & Online Presence**

- Launched and grew our **Instagram account** (@desertcrosslutheran), expanding our digital reach.

- Increased **engagement across Facebook and YouTube**, reaching thousands of people with our services, events, and messages of faith.
- Ensured that every worship service was available **via our website, app, and YouTube** so that people could participate from anywhere.

#### Major Technical & Facility Projects

- Coordinated the **40th Anniversary Celebration** livestream and event preparations.
- Assisted in the transition of **Spirit of Joy leaving the Gilbert campus**, ensuring a smooth technical setup for the next chapter of worship there.
- Began planning **new mic stands, music stands, and audio improvements** for Tempe and Gilbert.

#### Moments That Mattered

- Supporting **families during memorial services** by providing professional, high-quality music, audio, and video setups to honor their loved ones.
- Partnering with **community groups** like Stage of Mind and others to bring live performances into our spaces.
- Attending **conferences and ongoing training** to continue growing in my skills and leadership.
- Working alongside an incredible **team of volunteers, musicians, and staff** who make this work so fulfilling.

#### Looking Ahead to 2025

As I step fully into the role of **Director of Worship & Media Arts**, I am filled with excitement for what's to come. We have laid a strong foundation, and I am eager to build upon it by:

- **Expanding and deepening our music ministry**, encouraging even more participation from our congregation.
- **Continuing to develop our technology and online presence**, ensuring that we reach as many people as possible with the message of Christ.
- **Nurturing and training new volunteers** in both worship and media ministries.
- **Growing our creative worship experiences** to make every Sunday a meaningful and inspiring encounter with God.

#### A Heartfelt Thank You

I cannot express enough how much I appreciate the love, encouragement, and support I have received from this congregation and the church leadership. **You have welcomed me into this role with open arms, and I am honored to serve Desert Cross in this capacity.**

To our musicians, choir members, tech team, social media volunteers, and everyone who has stepped up to contribute—you are the heart of this ministry, and I couldn't do this without you.

As we move into 2025, I am filled with hope and anticipation for all that God has in store for us. **Thank you for lifting me up, for trusting me, and for walking this journey together in faith.** Let's continue to worship boldly, serve faithfully, and grow in love as we enter this new chapter!

**In His Service,**

*Joni Van Rossum*

## **Adult Ministries & Missional Service**

### **Stories of Joy**

Our Stories of Joy blog is seven years old. Our blog gathers and promotes Modern Day Gospel Stories. We keep an eye out for people “doing good” in the world, and we share those stories. It’s designed to be a tool for the people of Desert Cross to share good news stories with our family and friends. When you see Stories of Joy you enjoy, we encourage you to share our blog with others. For some good news in your inbox, sign up to follow the blog at [www.storiesofjoy.org](http://www.storiesofjoy.org)

2024 Stats for Stories of Joy:

130 Followers

107 Stories Published

1331 Visitors to our Website

2972 Views of our Webpages

49 Different Countries Viewed our Website

The countries with the highest views (after the US) were China, United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, India, Philippines, Ireland, Sweden, Australia, and Portugal.

### **Desert Cross Faith Formation Website**

This was our Desert Cross Faith Formation website’s sixth year. Our hope for this project is to provide folks with good tools to study the good news, wherever they are and whenever they have the time. Our tagline is: Exploring Faith. Making Connections. A few years ago we added monthly Playlists to the website, and we’ve continued that practice. We choose a theme for the month based on the lectionary readings and publish Playlists designed for Children, Youth, and Adults. Folks can explore the Playlists throughout the month at their own pace. Please sign up to follow the website at [www.dclcfathformation.org](http://www.dclcfathformation.org) to get updates on new posts.

2024 Stats for Desert Cross Faith Formation:

151 Followers

56 Posts

1360 Visitors to our Website

2637 Views of our Webpages

34 Different Countries Viewed our Website

The countries with the highest views (after the US) were Germany, China, Canada, Portugal, Indonesia, Sweden, Ireland, Israel, Italy, and Romania.

### **Adult Study**

The monthly Adult Playlist on our Desert Cross Faith Formation Website continues to be a good tool for faith formation. We use the theme from the Adult Playlist in our Adult Forum offered by Pastor Andrea and Pastor Thadd. Elaine Kraemer is leading a Meditation Group two times per week. We offered two Pastor Classes, one led by Pastor Steve and one led by Pastor Thadd. Lola Peterson and I offered Book Groups throughout the year. Thank you to all of them for offering studies, and a big thank you to all of you for attending these groups. It’s a blessing when we come together to learn together.

### **ChristCare Small Group Ministry**

We offered our first ChristCare Retreat since the pandemic. We gathered in February for our Tomorrow’s Church Today Retreat. Pastor Andrea and Pastor Thadd helped us look at how the culture and the Church are changing.

ChristCare Groups are a vital part of Desert Cross. The love and support folks receive in our groups is beautiful to witness. Thank you to our leaders and our group members for gathering together for study, fellowship, prayer, worship, and missional service.

Pastor Thadd, Dawn Collins, Tim Collins, and I serve on the Equipper Team. Thank you to our leaders and equippers for being my partners in this ministry.

### **Nonprofit Partnerships**

Forming nonprofit partnerships is part of the Desert Cross Strategic Plan. The people of Desert Cross told us that they want to get outside the walls of Desert Cross and serve in the neighborhood, so that's what we're working on with this project. For the last couple of years, I've been reaching out to nonprofits in the East Valley and asking how we can help them with their mission and serve alongside them. I prepare a monthly Desert Cross Serves Email Newsletter highlighting opportunities to serve outside the walls of Desert Cross.

In January, we kicked off Serve 40. In celebration of our 40 years of ministry, we encouraged everyone to serve 40 hours outside the walls of Desert Cross. By the end of 2024, forty-eight people reached that goal. Amazing! Where did you serve? AZCEND, CASA, community gardens, Habitat for Humanity, Hidden Treasures, Humane Society, Mesa Arts Center, neighborhood schools, Salvation Army, VA Hospital, and many, many more places out in our neighborhoods! This is in addition to all of the hours you give to the people and ministries of Desert Cross by serving in worship services, sharing your time on committees, taking care of each other by providing meals, and many, many more ways. You are incredible ambassadors of God's love!

Our challenge for 2025 is Serve Somewhere New. Let's all get out there and try a new way of serving this year.

### **Desert Cross Serves**

Our Faith Formation Team includes service projects and service events as part of our Faith Formation programming each semester. We held a Desert Cross Serves Project in January, packing health and hygiene items. Folks from Desert Cross took these bags to share with folks we saw in need around town. In November, we packed snack bags. We shared those bags with the City of Tempe's Team Hope.

We had a Feed My Starving Children Packing Event in April and a CROP Walk at our Gilbert Site in November.

We're looking forward to finding new ways to serve in 2025!

### **40 Years/40 Weeks/40 Stories**

We celebrated 40 Years of Ministry in 2024. One of the ways we celebrated was through stories. We published 40 stories from the people of Desert Cross. It was fun to meet with you, talk with you, and share your stories with our community. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this meaningful project. I loved it!

In Joyful Service,

*Denise McClellan*



## Children's Ministry

**Faith Formation:** DCLC is committed to nurturing our children, youth, and the adults who love them as we discover and experience God and community throughout life's journey. We believe the "passing on of faith" is done in community—there are HUGE benefits to having all generations praying, learning, and growing together. Faith Formation allows us to worship, serve, and learn together! We LOVE having the kids in worship and an education time for all ages. Education is at both sites and consists of an opening time with music and exploring the gospel and theme of the month through fun and interactive ways. Parents can attend the adult forum offered at the same time. Those with children under the age of 3 can attend Littlest Lutherans. We continue to update our Faith Formation website which includes playlists for children, youth, and adults to engage in faith from home or on the go! Each month we have a new theme and new activities. The faith formation website also has monthly resources that we post that relate to faith. We offer "DCLC Serves" events and fellowship events in the fall and spring. We love having the opportunity for the congregation to serve and have fun together. I am so thankful for the amazing teachers at Desert Cross who share their hearts and time. They do God's work beautifully! Thanks to Arianne Nannenga for her partnership in children's ministry. Also, thanks to our amazing families for their commitment and participation!

**Faith Milestones:** Our 3<sup>rd</sup> graders received instruction for *Holy Communion* at a workshop during Lent and received their First Communion on Maundy Thursday. We did Blessing of the Backpacks in August and the 1st graders received Bibles in September. Moms with new babies receive a new mom devotion book and kids that are baptized receive a card and invitations to our programs.

**Faith Luggage:** The Faith luggage was a fun addition. Each family can take it home for a week and spend some time in fun and faith together. The theme of the luggage is "Breakfast with Jesus" and it has devotionals, games, craft ideas, recipes and more. The family can do as much or as little as they want while they have the luggage. Then they will bring it back on Sunday for a new family to enjoy. The Tempe families had it in the Fall and Gilbert families started in the spring. This has been a fun way for families to have fun with faith at home.

**Joyful Noises-Parent-Tot:** This outreach program is rewarding for all. It is fun to watch the children learn the routines, songs, and prayers. It has also been a great fellowship time for the caregivers! It is truly a joy to work with these kids and families. We had some graduate out over the summer, but we had new ones join with the new school year.

**Kids Connect/Parents Connect:** Natalie handed off the reigns to Ari over the summer. Ari has done a great job planning for and leading Kids Connect. She continues to meet with the kids once a month for games, crafts, planned activities and lots of fun. Laura Book and other parents meet at a restaurant nearby while the kids are having fun. That way the parents get fellowship time too! We have even added Confirmation Connect, so any of the confirmation kids can also gather for fellowship at the restaurant at this time.

**Vacation Bible School:** Vacation Bible School this past summer (June 2024) was a great time! We had 65 kids attending, 32 of which were from other churches and 11 who do not have a home church. We had about 55 awesome volunteers! It is a lot of work and preparation, but the result is worth it...an amazing faith-filled week where volunteers and kids are diving deeper into their friendship with God! The focus was on how God is a friend who is real, a friend who loves, a friend we can trust, a friend forever, and a friend for everyone. For the service project the kids brought in donations to collect money

that will help kids in Honduras have access to clean water. We look forward to 2025's VBS, True North...a wilderness adventure!

**Service Sundays/Fellowship Events:** Service Sundays are a time for ALL generations to gather and work together to serve others! In January we packed hygiene packs for those in need and in March we had a Donut Day at both campuses. In October we had a Sundae Sunday, and a Service Sunday where we gathered all generations to make snack bags for those in need. Gilbert hosted their annual Easter egg hunt in the spring and their Trunk or Treat event in October. In December I offered a Nativity Night. We had a great time doing fun activities around the Nativity and enjoyed pizza and s'mores. We have such wonderful families here at Desert Cross and we value the opportunity and time to gather for fun, service, and fellowship!

I want to thank the Desert Cross staff, council, congregation, families, and children for making this another year full of blessings at Desert Cross. I look forward to this upcoming year!

In Faith and Love,

*Shannon Fossett*

## Parish Nurse

Health and wellness ministry, led by the Parish Nurse, provides an opportunity for the congregation to work with a health professional who is focused on their unique situation, using best practices from healthcare and faith. The Parish Nurse works with individuals confidentially addressing health concerns, advanced directives, insurance issues, care giving, grief and other issues. I loan and teach safe use of medical equipment to meet the needs of members and their families. I participate in continuing education sessions to maintain my professional knowledge.

The Parish Nurse supervises the nursery staff. Josh Fossett, Ryan Fossett, Laney Hunsaker, Brooklyn Wisch and Alexy Wisch work with our youngest members and their families to provide a fun and safe environment during worship and special events. Our experienced team serves during Vacation Bible School week to provide special services for the attendees.

The Stephen Ministry program trained and welcomed two new Stephen Ministers to the team this year. Stephen Ministers Heidi Maxson, Susan Pillard and Susan Johnston with Stephen Leaders Dave Landstrom and Denise Viker link with care receivers who are going through life challenges. The meetings between Stephen Ministers and care receivers are confidential with the caregiving process monitored in Supervision sessions. I appreciate the dedication of our team and the way in which they offer the compassionate presence of God to people in our care.

I am excited to report that thanks to a generous donation, DCLC was able to purchase automated external defibrillators (AEDs) for our community. These were purchased on a Black Friday sale at the end of the year but are experiencing a manufacturer's backorder with anticipated delivery in early 2025. The AED team of Mike McClellan, Dave Pillard and Heidi Maxson are working with the Parish Nurse to purchase the equipment, place the machines and develop procedures for maintaining and using the AEDs. I met with both Tempe and Gilbert fire officials who are advising us on the best ways to create and implement our safety plans.

Thanks to the years of support for the Parish Nurse Ministry, I can help others across the country. I worked on a committee to revise the Scope and Standards for Faith Community Nursing along with the American Nurses Association. I serve as the national coordinator for the FAN (faith, activity, nutrition) program and mentor other nurses starting and working in health ministry programs. This year I received national recognition for this work.

I am grateful to serve DCLC as the Parish Nurse

*Denise Viker, BSN, RN*

## Gilbert Chamber

Carolyn Perkins – Council Representative  
Tracey Landa – Worship Committee  
Rosemary Schlechty – Faith Formation Committee  
Joe Weingartz – Facilities Committee  
Jean O Donnell – Mission & Outreach Committee

Mari Johnson – Council Representative  
Leslie DeMarco – Communications  
Gary Balliet – Finance Committee  
Dana Hargis – Hospitality Committee

This has been an exciting year for Desert Cross Gilbert. May 2024 elections resulted in a fully staffed Gilbert Chamber as we welcomed Gary Balliet; Finance Team, Mari Johnson, Council Representative and Jean O Donnell; Outreach Team; as well as our current members: Joe Weingartz, Dana Hargis, Tracey Landa, Rosemary Schlechty, and Leslie DeMarco. We are thankful for Adam Pfau; Gilbert Council Representative and Glen Gabrielson; Finance Chair for Gilbert for their many contributions to this team. A special thank you to Joe Weingartz and Rosemary Schlechty who have served faithfully and elected to stay on another term.

Some key areas of progress at Gilbert Desert Cross in 2024:

- **LEAD Initiatives in 2024:** On October 12, 2024, Pastor Thadd led a group of twenty-seven leaders of the Gilbert Congregation who met to identify our strengths as a congregation as well as future areas of focus. Through thoughtful sessions creatively led by Pastor Thadd, the group identified three areas of concentration for the coming year. The first is a new vision for Visitors and Signage. This project will utilize the talents of members from LEAD with the existing Welcome Team to combine efforts. The other two initiatives include the development of more ministries for seniors and shut-ins at Desert Cross Gilbert and programs for youth and families with input from Tessa Faust, the new Youth Director. This cohesive effort not only reflects passion for the church's future but also sets a bold and exciting course for the coming year.
- **Refresh Team:** The Refresh Team conducted a well-received presentation at the Town Hall meeting in Gilbert on November 17, 2024. The presentation contained mockups and designs by Dana Hargis and Bryan Riensche for enlarging and modernizing our worship space with a complete exciting update to the Fellowship area.
- **Hymn Sing in April 2024** “How Great Thou Art” was a well attended collaborative event. The program featured the combined choirs of Desert Cross Gilbert, Tempe, the Handbell Choir from Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, led by Mike Riggert-Harris, friend of Charles Zoll. A new hymn written by Bennett Henrikson and Mary Ellen Loose; local composer was commissioned. \$1500.00 was collected by the “Cash-cow” created by Don Legacie to benefit the Gilbert Refresh Project. A lovely potluck dinner hosted by the Hospitality Team leader, Dana Hargis and her team provided a wonderful opportunity for fellowship after the hymn sing.
- **The Desert Cross Golf tournament**, held September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024, was an incredible success, bringing together a diverse group of individuals from both locations of Desert Cross plus many friends and family members. With an open invitation, the event fostered a sense of unity and camaraderie, as participants enjoyed not only the sport but also the fellowship that made the day truly special. The tournament exceeded expectations, generating a healthy profit of \$8700.00 for the General Fund, all while promoting a spirit of community and connection. It was a day filled with friendly competition, meaningful interactions, and a shared commitment to supporting a great cause. A big thank you to Gary and Jane Balliet who worked tirelessly to pull off a wonderful event.

- **Artwork donated to Gilbert by Tempe Desert Cross** was professionally matted and framed, thanks to the generosity of two families of Gilbert. This project was coordinated by Tracey Landis of the Worship Team and Dana Hargis and Bryan Riensche and completed for Reformation for Desert Cross 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.
- **Paraments for Gilbert Desert Cross**, important visual worship elements. Spirit of Joy started their own Coffee Shop ministry in the community in early December 2024 and we wish them well. Many of the altar paraments that belonged to SOJ were given away when they left so Tracey Landa worked with Jane Yost at Tempe location to find some paraments for Gilbert Desert Cross.
- **Outreach Team of Desert Cross Gilbert:** The generosity of Desert Cross Gilbert congregation was fantastic in 2024. Their support helping neighbors with needs filled the collection carts many times as they responded to every campaign. Thank you!

The Gilbert Desert Cross Outreach Committee began its work in June 2024 supporting Concordia Charter School with a very successful campaign for school supplies and first aid items. The congregation provided a full year of basic school supply needs for ninety students equipping them to have a successful year.

The “Be Thankful Food and Blanket” drive in October and November collected a wide variety of nonperishable food items to fill the shelves at Concordia Food Bank. More than one hundred families selected items with an estimated four hundred meals being provided. Forty fleece blankets were donated for LSS Family Center to share with those who needed a warm blanket this winter.

107 students at Concordia Charter School prepared a tag for the Angel Tree and received warm sweatshirts in their favorite color for Christmas.

A beautiful gift for teachers and students was a handmade quilt made by Desert Cross Quilters.

The Gilbert congregation joined Tempe Outreach to support I-Help by donating gifts. cards, socks, and gloves; Grace Lutheran Church with money for water bottles; mothers with purses filled with toiletries and cosmetics distributed by Shoebox Ministries and the weekly Hunger Jar supporting many different ministries. Thank you, thank you for your generous support of the Outreach Ministry.

Thank You to the committee members Pat Henrikson, Deb Christiansen, Susan Tischaefter, Greg Gille, Glen Stadler, Susan Buhl, Margaret Rouse-Meier, Karen Olson and especially to Jean O'Donnell, Chair for her wonderful leadership organizing and leading the campaigns!

- **Faith Formation:** Rosemary Schlechty as Education Chair ensures that the youngest of the members are nurtured in their faith each week. In concert with Shannon Fossett, she and her team ensure that there are opening songs, crafts, and Bible lessons for our children each Sunday. Shannon Fossett created the popular “Faith Luggage” that goes home with the student weekly, allowing engagement of the family. Thanks to Rosemary and her team for their loving investment of time for our children.

- **Trunk or Treat Event October 19, 2024**, was a wonderful success, thanks to Mari Johnson who coordinated the entire event. Eighty people from as far away as Queen Creek and Mesa attended as well as families in the nearby community. There were fourteen trunks, live music from the Ensemble, great fresh grilled hotdogs thanks to Dana and Dan Hargis and Brad Johnson. Jean O Donnell manned the Outreach Food donation drive which also got off to a great start. Thanks to all who participated and helped at this community event!
- **Ministry Fair:** This event was held Sunday November 10<sup>th</sup> at Gilbert Desert Cross led by Maegan Jennett. Fourteen ministries were represented with sponsored tables and leaders present to share information for our members.
- **Christmas Cantata and Cookie Reception:** On December 15, Desert Cross Gilbert hosted our first Christmas Cantata “O Holy Night” that featured all three performing groups at Gilbert, Chancel Choir, Jr Choir Ensemble, Liz Rewolinski, Marta Hatch, Chris Doyle, Trumpet and our guest soloist, Jennifer Nagy, Vocal Instructor at CGCC. The cantata featured beautiful altar decorations by Dana Hargis, inspiring music, and scripture readings. Afterward, we were treated to a wonderful cookie reception that fed the soul with an array of cookies and treats.
- **Desert Cross Caroling at Sunrise Assisted Living in Gilbert:** on December 22, 2024, 27 members and friends gathered for Christmas caroling for the residents at Sunrise in Gilbert. Ten children were there as well, adding to the enjoyment of the mini- service and music.
- **Hospitality** Special thanks to Dana Hargis and her team who have created so many lovely events this year, besides serving this congregation faithfully each week to provide treats and coffee, Soup Suppers, Special parties such as the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party for Pastor Thadd and Laura. Our thanks to Dana Hargis, Mari Johnson, Claudia Huss, Tracey Landa and Bev Zabkiewicz.
- **Communications:** A note of special thanks to Leslie DeMarco, our Communications Chair, who ensures that our meeting minutes are taken accurately to the letter and distributed each month. Accurate minutes are crucial to setting up future meetings and I truly appreciated the wonderful work done by Leslie.
- **Property:** A special note of thanks to Joe Weingartz who continually looks after every concern we have at Gilbert Desert Cross. His constant care and attention to the needs of our church do not go unnoticed. He deeply cares about making our space welcoming and well-maintained. Thank you for your commitment, your kindness, and your steady support.
- **Worship Coordinator:** A special thank- you to Sharynn Jennings who keeps everything organized for the persons who support worship each week. A great many persons and activities happen to make sure our worship flows seamlessly. She does a wonderful job and is greatly appreciated by all of us.
- **Altar Team:** A special thank-you to Tracey Landa and her team of dedicated persons who look after the elements for communion for weekly and special services. You are all greatly appreciated. The members are: Angela Nannenga, Gabriel Nannenga, Lori Gonzalez, Marie Ihlefeld and Kerry Wilson.
- **Prayer Teams Effort** has begun at Gilbert Desert Cross. We want your prayer requests. Procedures are being developed by Dwight Perkins, Pastor Thadd, and the Prayer Team for 5<sup>th</sup>

Sunday in- service prayers, weekly prayer cards completed for concerns and prayed for by the team, persons who can pray for you each week as well.

- **Music at Gilbert Desert Cross:**

**Chancel Choir:** We are so fortunate to have so many people who support our worship and music programs at Desert Cross Gilbert!

Chancel Choir has grown with sixteen faithful members. Marta Hatch has been a fantastic addition to our group as our accompanist. This year we produced an entire week of music for Holy Week, learning a difficult piece for Easter, added Brass to that as well. We presented the beautiful “Canticle of Joy” cantata at Christmas which was well attended. We are grateful for wonderful musicians like Liz Rewolinski, who plays the flute with our choir on a regular basis, as well as the Ensemble. Most of all, a special thank you to each one of our choir members who fills this calling to “sing praise to our Lord” for His goodness! Their dedication and love for what they do is a blessing.

**Jr Choir** has grown to eight regular members of a very vibrant and dynamic group of young people who work hard to provide great anthems at least once a month for worship. They produced “A Rockin Royal Christmas,” a hilarious tale of King Herod, creating a wonderful worship experience for our congregation on December 22, 2024. Special thanks to Donna Tainter who created the wonderful costumes and Jerry Whiting who provided coaching for our kids as well as the adults who played the part of angels and wisemen! My personal thanks to Keziah Miner who takes time to play for the Jr Choir when they sing and for our Ensemble.

**Ensemble:** We are so fortunate to have wonderful instrumentalists who play for our services and special music each week. Ariane Nannenga, Leanna Ihlefeld, Alice Pfau, Laura Book, Liz Rewolinski all provide music on their instruments that truly enhance worship. Zoe Jennett and Reagan Lundberg will be joining us this month.

It has been an exciting, wonderful year for Desert Cross Gilbert with many great accomplishments from our members who in a fine spirit of service, give and serve in love! A special thank you to our Gilbert Chamber members for their constant inspiration, creativity and true joy in serving God in their roles. It is an honor to be part of what God is doing here at our church and a joy to serve our Good and Gracious Lord!

With deep gratitude,

*Carolyn Perkins*

Gilbert Chamber Council Representative

## **Mission Endowment Fund**

As of 11/30/2024, the balance for Desert Cross ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust was \$592,434.87.

The Mission Investment Fund Checking Account balance on 12/31/2024 was \$16,888.94.

The DCLC Mission Endowment Fund received 17 grant requests and recommended 16 for approval by the church council, according to the guidelines established by the congregation. (A grant for \$1,100.00 for a DCLC Summer Art Academy to be run by Carolyn Perkins was approved but not utilized)

Specific grants:

### **Category 1- Community Outreach (Scholarships and Social Programs)**

8 grants approved for college scholarships for DCLC students: \$1,000.00 each, totaling \$8,000.00.

Grand Canyon Synod Retirees Retreat: \$600.00

Luther Seminary Scholarship Fund: \$2,500.00

### **Category 2- Missions of the ELCA in the continent and worldwide**

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry, AZ (LAMA): \$2,000.00

### **Category 3- Capital Improvements DCLC**

DCLC Gilbert A/V equipment and cabinetry: \$3,137.75

DCLC Gilbert soundboard: \$2,000.00

New media computer: \$1,150.00

Tempe community center stage repair: \$4,000.00

Total grant payments of \$23,387.75 were issued.

The balance in the investment fund ensures the committee will have resources for 2025 grants.

The committee looks forward to continuing the mission outreach of DCLC.

Respectfully submitted,

*Terry Kaiser Borning*

Mission Endowment Fund Committee Chair

Members of the committee: John Christiansen, Terry Kaiser Borning, Matt Hunsaker, Mike McClellan and Herb Mardany



## **TEMPE COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY**

The Community Outreach Ministry is a group of members that reaches out to serve the needs of others with emphasis on the local community. The Ministry achieves its goals through the efforts of volunteers who give of their time and talent to various projects, along with the generosity of the Congregation.

Those we supported in 2024:

**BLOOD DRIVES** - The blood drives have been very successful. There were five drives this year with a total 111 acceptable donations.

**KYRENE SCHOOL DISTRICT RESOURCE CENTER** - the Center collects needed items for the 700 families in the district who are underprivileged, with some living in their cars, hotels, or with other family members or are considered living below the poverty level. The Resource Center has available for these families, clothing, food, school supplies, and assistance in finding the social services they need. Socks, undies, and school supplies are gathered at various times of the year. There is always a need for these items.

**STEP UP CHARTER SCHOOL** - is a K-8, Title 1, non-profit, charter school established in 2012. They are housed in Mesa's Washington Park Activity Center. The school serves a population of about 90 students. Socks, undies, and school supplies are needed for this school also. Hunger Jar offerings provide the opportunity to buy needed supplies.

**COMMUNITY BABY SHOWER** - This is a cooperative effort with Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest. The program offers education and support to parents of newborns who have little or no support systems. They are housed in the Family Resource Center in Mesa. In addition to items donated by the DCLC congregation, the Hunger Jar funds were used to buy enough to fill each of SIXTY diaper bags with books, toy, clothing, blanket, and lots of diapers.

**WOMEN4WOMEN TEMPE** - Women4Women Tempe is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization which distributes much needed feminine hygiene products to women in our communities who are either experiencing homelessness, or who are financially unable to afford these items. Products are also distributed to schoolgirls by school nurses. We were able to send \$2,430 from the Hunger Jar offerings in August to Women4Women to purchase product for distribution to over 30 different organizations, medical facilities, homelessness outreaches, schools, food pantries, and drug rehab centers. We held a packing party here at church and packed 446 bags in 45 minutes.

**SHOEBOX MINISTRIES** - New and like new purses are collected for women living in shelters. Many purses and sundry cosmetic items were collected. These items are given in hopes their Mother's Day is special.

**GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH** - We provide funds for bottled water and cool room respite with the Hunger Jar contributions. \$2,993 was shared equally with Grace and Kyrene Resource Center.

**SUPER BOWL CONTEST AND FOOD DRIVE** - Cans of soup and crackers and canned foods are collected on Super Bowl Sunday. Hunger Jar offerings are gathered in the names of the two competing football teams. Oftentimes a third team is involved in the competition!!!! A total of \$770 and 168 pounds of food was collected. All funds and goods were distributed to Grace Lutheran and Kyrene's homeless food pantry.

**BE THANKFUL FOOD DRIVE AT THANKSGIVING** - 446 pounds of dry goods and 15 turkeys were donated. Collections support Kyrene Resource Center, Matthew's Crossing, Chandler Salvation Army.

**ANGEL TREE AT CHRISTMAS** - at Christmas time, we place an Angel Tree in the Narthex. Kyrene Resource Center provides the names with wishes of children, ages 15 and under, for several families. Each child receives one item of warm clothing and one toy or special item of their request. We also provide gift cards for food for each family to enjoy a holiday dinner. We were able to provide gifts for 72 children from 16 families. We are hopeful that everyone who takes a tag is able to purchase a gift for that tag and return a gift for that child.

We have had discussions and shared a few projects with the Gilbert committee as they are rebuilding their committee. It has been wonderful to have those discussions and share in the ministry of serving the needs of others in our local community.

**THANK YOU** to June Bowman, a faithful partner in this ministry. She knows the projects and helps us stay focused on the needs and opportunities to minister to those in need.

**THANK YOU** also to Doug Bjotvedt for assisting with the logistics of the financial aspects.

**THANK YOU** to the Committee members for their passion and their willingness to take on projects and follow through to completion.

**THANK YOU** to the Congregation for contributions of gift cards, money, food, clothing, and various items requested during the year. **YOU ARE LOVED AND WE ARE BLESSED TO BE IN THIS MINISTRY TOGETHER.**

For the Committee,

*Lola Peterson*

### Memorial Garden/Columbarium

The Memorial Garden/Columbarium was established as part of the Ministry at Desert Cross that begins with baptism and continues to the end of life, from birth to death, ashes to ashes. The Garden is a witness within the surrounding community. It is available to Desert Cross Lutheran Church members and family members. Provision was also made for inurement of a person with a serious financial need.

Four niches were purchased in 2024, making a total of 75 niches purchased. Five committals. There is room in each niche for two urns.

The Renew Committee met during the year to develop plans for updating the Memorial Garden/Columbarium area. In the meantime, the fountain needed refurbishment and painting of the surface. Heartfelt thanks to Mark Farrell and his crew for completing the update of the fountain.

You are encouraged to consider the purchase of a niche as you contemplate the end-of-life planning. The placing of the urn in the niche at the completion of the Celebration of Life Service is a special time for family and friends to celebrate that life. You are also encouraged to stop and take time to sit, pray, and meditate from time to time.

Memorial Garden Maintenance,

*Lola Peterson*

## **Scout Troop 379**

On December 12<sup>th</sup> our Scoutmaster of more than 20 years Alan Garlington passed away. Peter Weisman, an Asst. Scoutmaster is the Interim Scoutmaster. We have identified Kelsey Files as the next Scoutmaster and Peter will take over as Committee Chair. Duane Lidman will stepdown July 1 as Committee Chair and be part of the committee. Thanks to Desert Cross for continuing to support Scouting America and Troop 379. The Scouting program is really a wonderful opportunity for youth to build character, learn leadership skills and to take care of themselves in the outdoors. They do this by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

The number of scouts in Troop 379 has reduced significantly in the last couple of years and continues to drop. Recruiting new scouts has been difficult since we do not have a cub scout group who normally feeds into the troop. Recruitment is through word of mouth and family referrals. We will always welcome new scouts at any time of the year. We have 2 committee members who have stepped up to work on recruitment. Youth from age 11 to 18 are welcome in the Scouting America program. We are starting a girls troop this year. We are finding families who have a son and daughter and would join us if we were and to provide a place for both.

At the last recharter with the National organization, Troop 379 registered 23 scouts and 15 adult leaders. This is down from the 27 scouts a few years earlier.

Meetings are on Monday evening in the Church Community Center. Typically, there will be 10-15 scouts at the meetings. Every month we have outing where we go camping, backpacking or some other activity. This weekend we are camping at Peralta Trail. We will have 12 Scouts going on this trip.

Every year we have a week's camping experience at a national summer camp. Last summer we went to Camp JN Webster in Connecticut. 15 Scouts attended along with 7 adult leaders. This trip combined with some girls from another troop who have brothers in our troop This summer we plan to attend Camp Cris Dobbins in Colorado.

The highest scout rank in scouting is the Eagle Scout. To date, Troop 379 has had 120 Eagle Scouts. 2 of these awards were achieved in 2024. There were 2 Eagles in 2023. Currently, there are 7 Life scouts in the troop. This is the rank just prior to Eagle. 5 of these are very close to Eagle for 2025.

Again, thanks to Desert Cross Lutheran Church for being our sponsor and the congregation for their support in our Christmas Wreath fundraiser every year.

Sincerely,

Peter Weisman, Interim Scoutmaster Troop 379, Desert Cross Lutheran Church

## Notes

