# Strategic Plan 2026 – 2030


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## *A Prayer for Our Congregation*

***God of wholeness and grace,***

***As we chart the path ahead, we seek Your wisdom and presence. May our plans nourish bodies through service, minds through learning, and souls through worship. Let this vision reflect Your compassion, inspire unity, and bear fruit in our community. Guide every step we take, that we may serve with joy, lead with humility, and grow in faith.***

***In Christ's name we pray, Amen.***

# Faith Lutheran Church Strategic Priorities

Faith Lutheran Church enters 2026 with renewed purpose, building on insights from our Mission Assessment and the momentum of our capital campaign. Guided by Hosea 10:12, we embrace a year of rest, renewal, and growth, tending the "soil" of ministry with intention and hope***. Our work centers on three core pillars: Nourishing Minds, Bodies, and Souls, which shape our ministry focus and guide our priorities for the coming year.***

This year's direction calls us to strengthen our core ministries, deepen Congregational engagement, and expand our capacity to serve the wider community. By aligning our programs, leadership efforts, and resource planning around shared goals, we seek to cultivate a resilient ministry ecosystem—one that supports discipleship, fosters meaningful relationships, and reflects our call to faithful service. These commitments form a unified framework that integrates spiritual formation with strategic action.

As we step into this next season of ministry, we do so with gratitude for God's faithfulness and confidence in the path ahead. Rooted in Scripture, guided by our mission, and strengthened by the gifts of this Congregation, we commit ourselves to the steady, faithful work of tending the soil entrusted to us. With hearts open to renewal and hands ready for service, Faith Lutheran Church moves forward trusting that God will bring forth growth in time - growth that nourishes minds, bodies, and souls, and equips us for vibrant ministry in the years to come.

As we prepare for Phase 3 of our facility growth, we remain committed to aligning our physical spaces with our mission and the needs of a growing Congregation. This phase emphasizes enhancing areas for education and discipleship, strengthening hospitality and community engagement, improving accessibility and safety, and ensuring long-term sustainability. Through faithful stewardship and mission-aligned planning, we seek to create spaces that support vibrant ministry today and position Faith Lutheran Church for continued growth in the years ahead.

## New Strategic Plan Format

This year the Faith Lutheran Church Strategy Plan is organized into a different format. There is the Priorities Section of two (2-Pages) and the remaining information in nine Appendixes. They are:

- Appendix A – Mission Assessment
- Appendix B – Mission Priorities: Nourishing Minds, Bodies, and Souls
- Appendix C – Adult Discipleship and Education Vision Framework
- Appendix D – Ministry Metrics and Participation Trends
- Appendix E – Facility Planning: Church Campus Infrastructure Evaluation and Expansion Program
- Appendix F – Five Year Financial Plan Overview and Stewardship Assessment
- Appendix G – Policies, Governance, and Organizational Structure
- Appendix H – Supporting Documents and Reference Material

## Summary and Recommendations

Faith Lutheran Church's Strategic Plan for 2026-2030 provides continuity from previous plans. Development and update of the Strategic Plan is a major priority as it identifies our way ahead and provides a historical context for decisions made.

Our Congregation continues to worship, thrive, and support various ministries and support the Central/South Illinois Synod with financial contributions, ELCA missions, Lutheran World Relief, and the local O'Fallon Community through our Programs for Young Children, Community Meals, Food Pantry, and other ministries. We always seek Christ.

The Planning and Development Board identified the following actions to focus on in 2026:

- **Complete** the next set of actions required to advance Phase 3 planning for the Faith Lutheran Church campus.
- **Host** the annual leadership retreat.
- **Strengthen** cybersecurity and data protection across Faith Lutheran's operations to maintain trust, support effective administration, and align our practices with modern standards for digital stewardship.
- **Undertake** a six-month evaluation of Faith Lutheran's staffing and governing structure with the assistance of an external consultant.
- **Review** the 2024 Mission Assessment as time permits.
- **Prepare** the Strategic Plan for 2027–2031.

Pastor Candice, Susan Carlson, Steve Frederickson, John Masur, Mark Sauer, Bill Souser, Jane Wieland, and Becky Ahlvin authored the Faith Lutheran Church Strategic Plan 2026-2030.

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# APPENDIX A – MISSION ASSESSMENT

## Future Trends in Lutheranism for 2026

Using online searches, emerging ministry trends for Lutheran churches in 2026 were identified that can affect Faith Lutheran Church's ministry, outreach, and growth. The P&D Board will keep these in mind as we continue our efforts throughout 2026. Several trends are expected to shape the landscape of our Congregations' operations and growth, they are:

- **Rising Spiritual Openness Paired with Declining Commitment.** Search results highlight a major "meta trend" for 2026. Spiritual curiosity is increasing, but active Christian practice is declining. For Lutheran Congregations, this means:
    - More people are open to conversations about faith, Scripture, and meaning.
    - Fewer people are attending worship regularly or integrating faith into daily life.
    - The gap between "believers" and "disciples" is widening.

  This creates both a challenge (declining engagement) and an opportunity (high receptivity).

- **Renewed Focus on Discipleship Formation.** The Lutheran pastor who conducted the analysis, for 2026 trends, identified that discipleship—not just belief—is the defining challenge for the year. Expect to see:
    - More emphasis on catechesis, small group formation, and mentoring.
    - A shift from program driven ministry to relationship driven ministry.
    - Stronger integration of Lutheran theology into everyday life practices.

  This aligns well with our Congregation's "Turning the Soil" theme—formation over activity.

- **Growth of "Non-Practicing Lutherans."** The data referenced in the 2026 trend analysis notes:
    - Half of Christians say faith is not central to their lives.
    - Only one in four actively practice their faith.

  Within Lutheranism, this means a growing category of "Lutheran identifying but not participating" individuals and increased need for re engagement strategies, pastoral outreach, and relational ministry.

- **Increased Demand for Hybrid Worship & Digital Discipleship.** While not Lutheran specific, the 2026 church trend analysis applies directly:
    - Digital engagement remains essential for younger and dispersed members.
    - Hybrid worship, online Bible studies, and digital pastoral care continue to grow.
    - Lutheran Congregations with strong liturgical identity are finding creative ways to adapt without losing theological depth.
- **Staffing and Leadership Shifts.** Across denominations, projected 2026 trends show:
    - Rising burnout among clergy and staff.
    - Increased need for specialized roles (discipleship, digital ministry, community engagement).
    - Pressure to rebalance staffing models to match attendance and giving patterns.

  This mirrors the staffing considerations in our five-year plan.

- **Lutheran Distinctives Becoming an Asset.** The 2026 analysis notes that Lutheran theology "shines in a discipleship crisis". Why?
    - Law/Gospel clarity.
    - Strong sacramental grounding.
    - Emphasis on vocation and daily faith.
    - Catechetical depth.

  These strengths position Lutheran Congregations to respond meaningfully to the cultural moment.

- **Increase Focus on Community Presence and Local Mission.** As national affiliation declines, local engagement becomes more important:
    - Partnerships with schools, nonprofits, and service agencies
    - Community based hospitality and outreach
    - Ministries addressing loneliness, mental health, and economic stress

  Lutheran Congregations with strong community roots (like Faith Lutheran) are well positioned.

In Summary, the future of Lutheranism in 2026 is shaped by a paradox: greater spiritual openness but weaker commitment. The response is clear—deep discipleship, relational ministry, and mission aligned leadership. Lutheran theology and Congregational life offer exactly the tools needed for this moment.

Source: 7 Disruptive Church Trends in 2026 | Are You Ready, Gary Niewwhhof / Organizational and Cultural Trends at: https://careynieuwhof.com/church-trends-2026/

## Internal Mission Assessment

Besides looking at future external trends that could impact our Congregation, Faith Lutheran Church conducted an internal Congregation Mission Assessment (CMA) in March–April 2024 to gain a clear understanding of our current ministry strengths, emerging needs, and opportunities for growth. This assessment served as a key component of our long-range planning efforts, providing insight into Congregational priorities and readiness as we prepared for the Phase 2 Capital Campaign. The findings offer a grounded picture of where we are today and help shape the strategic direction that will guide our ministry, facilities, and stewardship decisions in the years ahead. A copy of the study is found at: https://www.faithofallon.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Faith-LC-OFallon-MA-Report-2024.pdf**.**

The objectives of the study were:

- Assessment of institutional readiness for pursuing Phase 2 of the Congregation's Facilities Master Plan. This was the primary and most urgent aspect of the study, as the Congregation hoped to begin construction in June 2024, and there would be considerable fundraising effort required to meet that deadline.
- Assessment of Congregational Ministry Hopes and Dreams.
- Assessment of Congregational challenges and obstacles.
- Prepare and present a summary of findings and ministry recommendations reflecting perceived needs and suggested priorities.

The CMA detailed 12 recommended areas for improvement. They are:

- Proceed with the proposed capital appeal for Faith's Phase 2 projects, based on the assessment of "Institutional Readiness"
- Continue to work to implement Faith's vision for staffing.
- Work to become a more welcoming church.
- Work to become an inviting church.
- Work to become a more inclusive church.
- Develop strategies for external and internal communications and Congregational marketing, with an emphasis on telling stories of ministry success.
- Focus on deepening discipleship, including clearly stated, mutual/shared expectations.
- Find ways to build stronger bonds between PYC and the Congregation. Celebrate PYC's excellence and continued potential through investments of any and every kind.
- Explore ways to cultivate future Congregational leaders through intentional mentoring or partnership.
- Explore additional ways to integrate new members into meaningful and long-lasting ministry roles through "shepherds" or other mentoring/partnering methods.
- Strengthen connections with the Central/Southern Illinois Synod and ELCA by taking advantage of valuable resources and programs.
- Develop the team, infrastructure, and strategy needed for a comprehensive Senior Adult ministry.

Planning and Development (P&D) chose the three (3) most impactful areas to address, each involving "Discipleship" in some manner. We then asked each Board to identify two (2) or three (3) actionable tasks to focus on these recommendations.

- Work to become a more welcoming church.
- Focus on deepening discipleship, including clearly stated, mutual/shared expectations.
- Explore additional ways to integrate new members into meaningful ministry roles through "shepherds" or other mentoring/partnering methods.

In 2026, the P&D Board intends to conduct a strategic review of the 12 recommendations to guide future action.

# APPENDIX B – MISSION PRIORITIES: NOURISHING MINDS, BODIES, AND SOULS

*"Break up your unplowed ground, for it is time to seek the Lord." Hosea 10:12*

The year-long focus on Hosea 10:12 offers us an opportunity to move through seasons of rest, renewal, and growth. The soil of ministry, like the soil of earth, must be tended, loosened, nourished, and trusted to bear fruit in time. Each month will offer a challenge on turning the soil with intention and hope.

## Season One: Resting The Ground (January – April)

- **January – Notice the Field:** Walk through the "fields" of your ministry (hallways, classrooms, worship spaces) and simply observe. Ask: Where is life? Where is fatigue? Intentionally write down your observations.
- **February – Name the Fruit:** Each council or staff member names one thing God grew this past year that was not in their plan. Post them on the board entitled, "Fruit We Didn't Plant."
- **March – Bless the Dormant Places:** Visit a ministry or relationship that feels stagnant. Do not fix it. Bless it. Pray for it.
- **April – Let Something Lie Fallow:** Choose one task, tradition, or program to rest for a season. Frame it as an act of faith: "We trust God enough to stop doing this for a while."

## Season Two: Loosening The Ground (May – August)

- **May – Break the Surface:** Try one conversation or event that feels slightly uncomfortable or new. Ask someone, "What do you wish the church would risk trying?"
- **June – Mix the Soil:** Invite someone you do not normally serve with to join you at an event or activity. Be intentional about learning their story and sharing yours.
- **July – Water Deeply:** Focus on spiritual nourishment – no projects, just prayer. Have a "Sabbath month" for committees: cancel one meeting and replace it with a shared meal.
- **August – Pull the Weeds:** Identify one habit, phrase, or structure that is choking new growth ("We've always done it this way"). Name it aloud and release it.

## Season Three: Planting And Tending (September – December)

- **September – Scatter New Seed:** Try one new ministry idea, no matter how small. Even a single new partnership or experiment counts.
- **October – Watch for Sprouts:** Celebrate tiny signs of renewal. Create a "Green Things" board – people post short notes when they see life emerging.
- **November – Share the Harvest:** Tell stories publicly of how God used small risks for growth this year. Use worship, newsletters, and/or testimonies.
- **December – Rest the Ground Again:** Reflect and rest. Hold a service or meeting of gratitude for what grew, and for what did not yet. Read Hosea 10:12 again and notice how the ground has changed.

# APPENDIX C – ADULT DISCIPLESHIP AND EDUCATION VISION FRAMEWORK

Faith Lutheran Church recognizes the need for a cohesive, Congregation-wide vision for adult discipleship—one that strengthens Biblical literacy, deepens spiritual practices, and equips members to live out their faith with clarity and purpose. Over the coming months, the Congregation will develop an Adult Discipleship and Education Vision Framework that outlines our long-term goals, core principles, and recommended pathways for adult learning. This framework will serve as a guiding document for future programming, leadership development, and small-group ministry, ensuring that our efforts are aligned with our mission to nourish minds, bodies, and souls.

Preparatory work for the framework is already underway, as shown in Figure 1. A planning session is scheduled for February 2026 to gather the information needed to begin drafting the framework, drawing on insights from staff, ministry leaders, and the Congregation Council. After this material is collected, the leadership team will synthesize the findings into a clear and actionable vision to guide adult discipleship for years to come. This intentional, phased process ensures that the final framework is both spiritually grounded and responsive to the needs of our congregation.

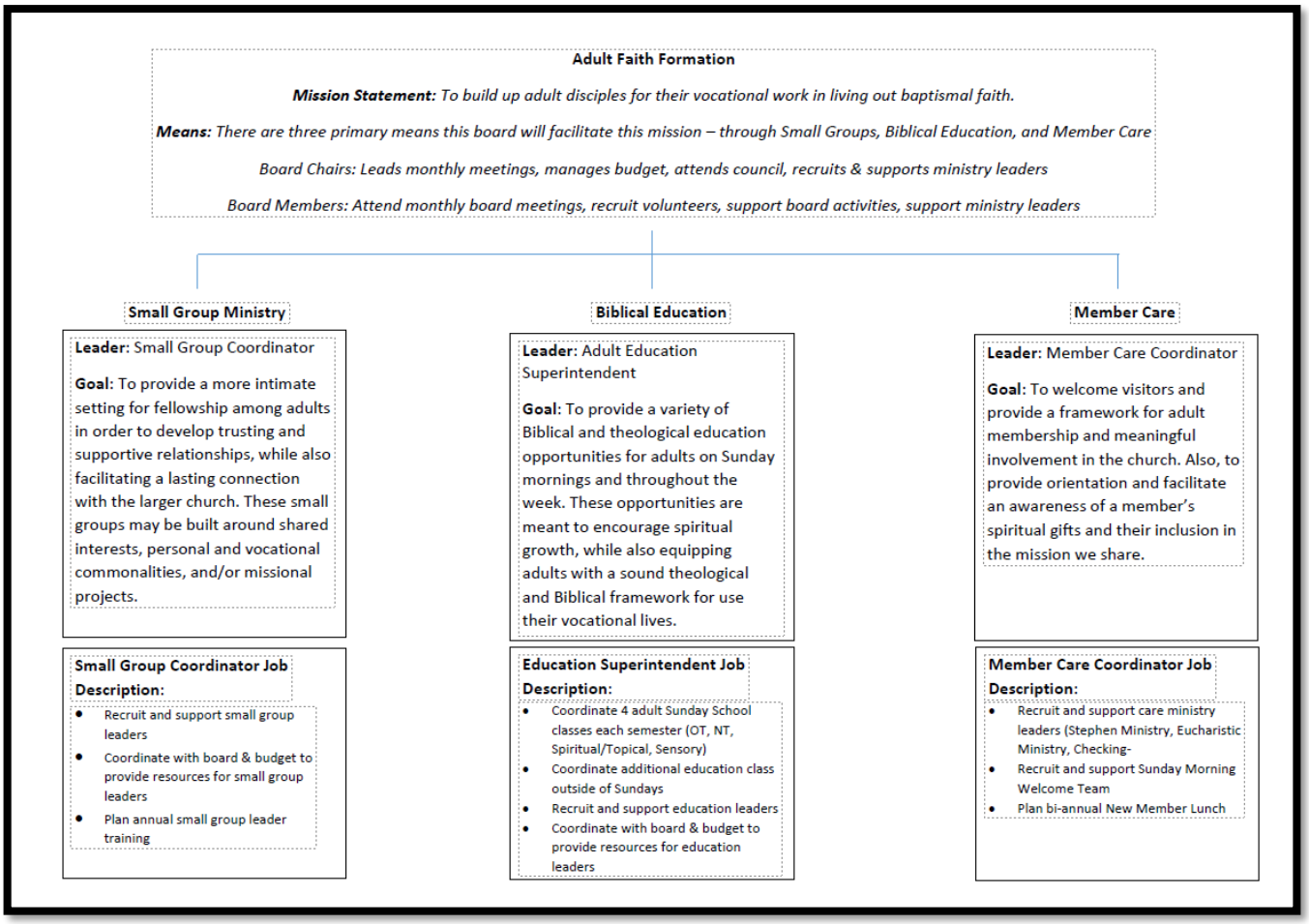


*Figure 1, Initial Adult Faith Foundation Concept*

# APPENDIX D – MINISTRY METRICS AND PARTICIPATION TRENDS

At Faith Lutheran, we utilize "Attendance" and "Financial" numbers for benchmarking. This has taken place since inception of the Congregation. In determining these metrics, a decision was made that participation in church services and activities was more important than mere membership. Benchmarking enables our Congregation to measure success against other planning years to discover if there is a gap in performance. Studying previous year's numbers can highlight what it takes to enhance our Congregation's efficiency and growth. It assists in assessing the adequacy of our facilities and informs long-range decisions about space utilization, renovation, and future expansion.

Attendance metrics focus on worship services each Sunday (in-person and virtual), which service is attended/watched, and weekly Sunday School participation. Income numbers assist in determining the supportability of worship activities, ministries, staffing, and future planning resources. We also reviewed the ELCA Trend report that incorporates demographics. It enables the Congregation to assess Congregational statistics over a multi-year period from an outside perspective.

## Total Worship Attendance

Total worship attendance provides a measure of the activity level of our Congregation. Our goal is to increase the number of people in the seats to hear the Word and participate in worship on Sunday morning. As Figure 2 indicates, Faith has experienced a steady growth in Sunday worship attendance. Twenty years ago, our Sunday worship participation averaged just over 200 per Sunday and approached an average of 320 people attending Sunday worship ten years ago. Attendance declined following that peak but then started to recover with an indication of growth for several years. Unfortunately, with the COVID pandemic hitting in March 2020, services were cancelled to ensure the safety of our members. Faith implemented guidelines to allow safe participation in Sunday services. The last two years have seen a slow, but steady recovery in attendance, and 2025 saw attendance back to pre-pandemic levels.

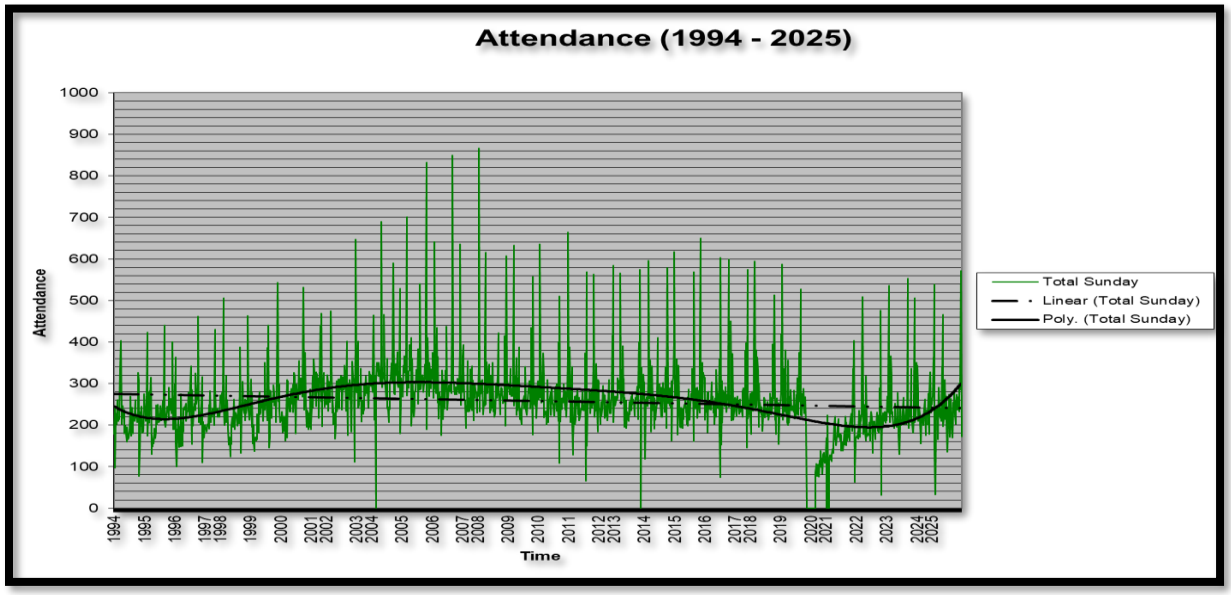


*Figure 2, Faith Lutheran Church Worship Attendance Since 1994*

Another view of attendance is shown in Figure 3 which shows the last 10 years. This expanded view shows trends in a more exaggerated manner. It reflects the upward trend going into 2020, then the drastic falloff with services being cancelled. When services were cancelled due to COVID, Faith moved to supply the Word through online services and fill the void. The number of YouTube and Facebook views are included on this chart to show the total number of people participating in our Sunday services. In the future, this will grow in importance in our mission to spread the Word and we need to find better ways to measure participation and effectiveness of the online services. During 2024, online participation levelled off at a steady rate. We are still focused on the quality of the presentation.

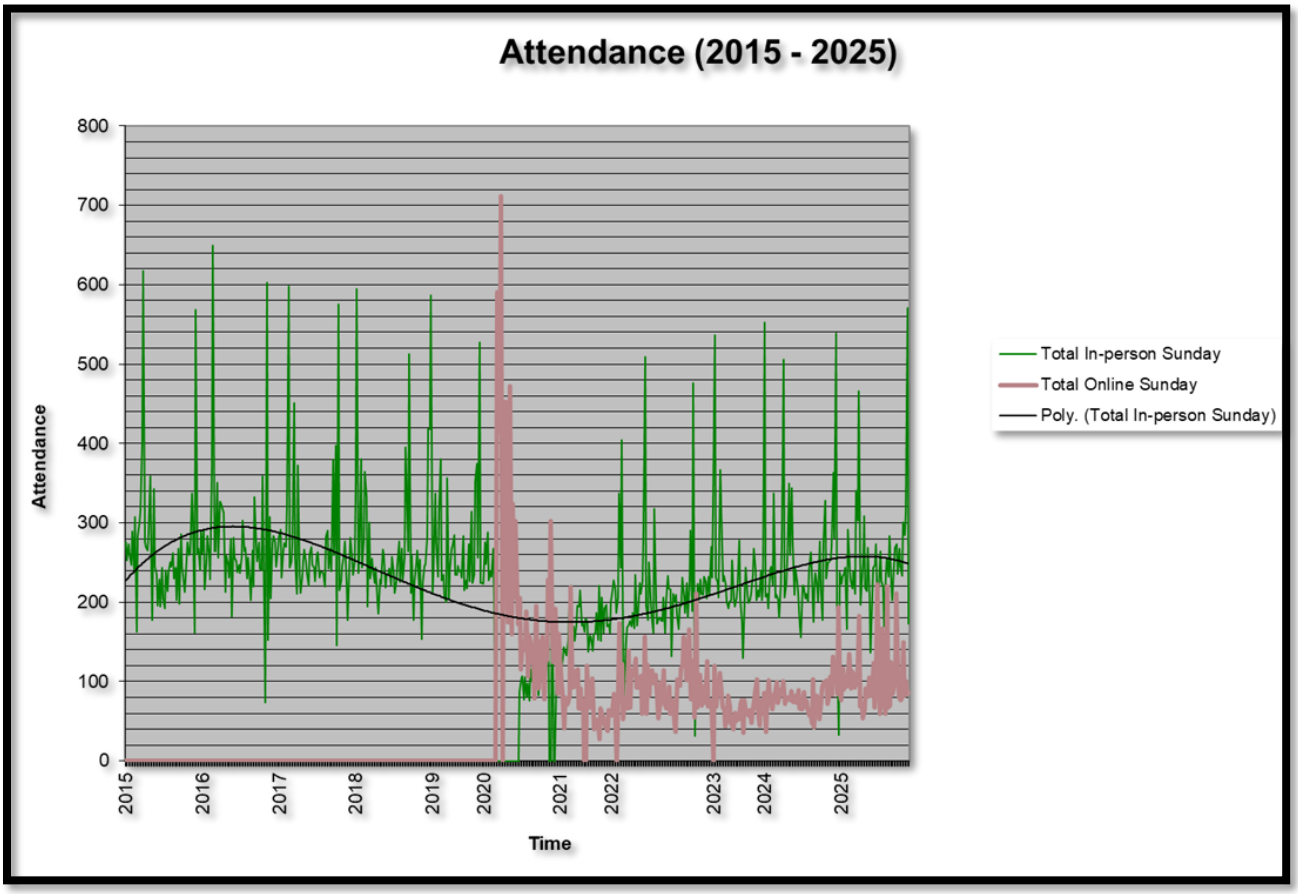


*Figure 3, Previous 10-Year Attendance Trends*

## Attendance at Each Sunday Service

Another key metric is attendance at each Sunday Service time as shown in Figure 4. This indicator drives the number of services offered and the requirement to expand our worship facility. Two measures of sanctuary capacity are looked at. "Uncomfortably Full" is approximately 80% of the seating capacity or around 205 people for our sanctuary. If more than 205 people attend a service a crowded feeling will result and if this level is exceeded consistently, people may not want to attend because of this crowded feeling. The "Uncomfortably Full" threshold is approximately 205 people, while the "Uncomfortably Empty" level is around 80. These benchmarks help us understand how current attendance patterns interact with our space. Since the decision was made in mid-2022 to move to two Sunday services, the 9 a.m. service time continues with the highest attendance, with the 10:30 a.m. service presenting an increasing trend. Both services show growth during the last year.

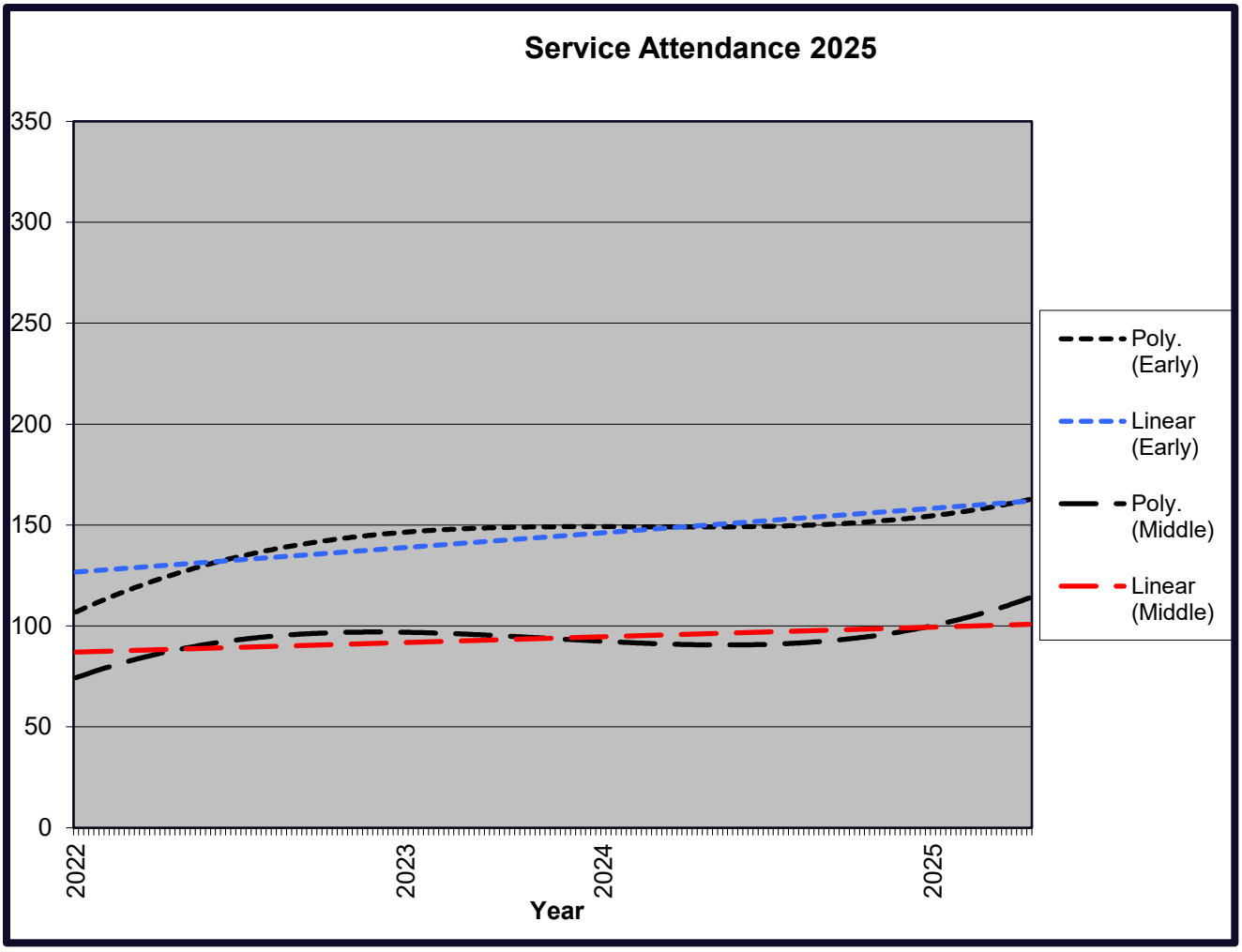


*Figure 4, Faith Lutheran Church 2025 Sunday Service Attendance*

## Sunday School Attendance

Christian education is a fundamental mission of Faith and is another metric tracked. Our Sunday School program saw an uptick in attendance for grades Pre-K through 8th grade in 2019. The high school class had diminished. This graphic does not include attendance for adult classes due to problems in collecting data, but adult bible study was a concern that is being addressed through expanded offerings. Sunday School classes are also one of the main uses of church facilities. Figure 5 shows the average attendance per age group. When the average group size is more than 10 students, plus teachers, the rooms get very crowded. This situation needs to be examined in both the near term and long term.

Attendance during 2022 averaged approximately 30 students per week and the fall of 2023 saw between 30 to 35 students per Sunday. In 2024, the Sunday School averaged 31 students per week with 2025 seeing the same. Adult Sunday School averages from 15 to just over 20 attending each Sunday. This slow recovery since COVID is still concerning and continues to be evaluated.

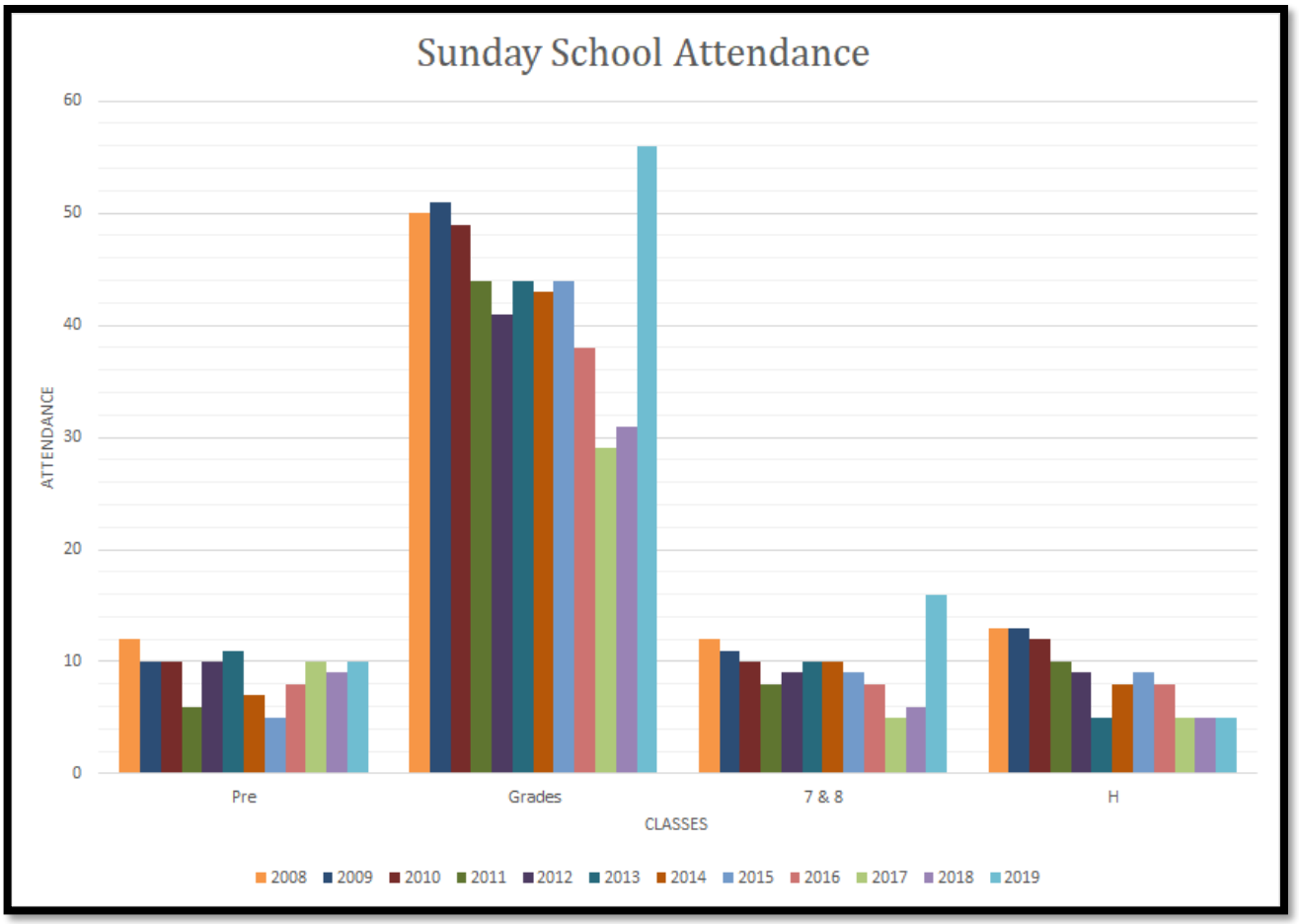


*Figure 5, Faith Lutheran Church Sunday School Attendance (Source: Internal Numbers)*

## Faith Lutheran Church ELCA Trend Report Data

The ELCA Trend Report is compiled annually from data submitted by Faith Lutheran to the Synod. While it mirrors our internal reporting, it presents the information in a standardized, raw-data format and functions as a lagging indicator, typically running one year behind current figures. The 2025 ELCA Report will not be available until late Spring; once released, the P&D Board will compare it with the 2024 Report to assess year-over-year changes. The Trend Report is especially useful for examining multi-year patterns in worship attendance, membership demographics, and financial giving. Based on our internal numbers, we look forward to reviewing the 2025 Trend Report when it becomes available. As a result, the ELCA Trend Report highlights the following areas:

- Membership – Table 1
- Attendance – Table 2
- Giving – Table 3
- Ethnic Participation – Table 4
- Assistance Provided to People with Disabilities (Accessibility) – Table 5

*Table 1, Faith Lutheran Church Membership Change Data 2017-2024 (ELCA 2024 Trend Report)*

**Membership Change**

| Year | Baptism: Children | Baptism: Adult | Affirmation of Faith | Transfer | Other & Stat. Adjustment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2024 | 6 | 0 | 24 | 12 | 0 |
| 2023 | 9 | 0 | 43 | 5 | 0 |
| 2022 | 8 | 0 | 37 | 7 | 0 |
| 2021 | 4 | 0 | 15 | 17 | 0 |
| 2020 | 4 | 0 | 16 | 0 | 0 |
| 2019 | 12 | 0 | 23 | 6 | 0 |
| 2018 | 6 | 0 | 13 | 19 | 0 |
| 2017 | 2 | 0 | 26 | 7 | 3 |

**Membership Change Cont.**

| Year | Death | Transfer | Other & Stat. Adjustment |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2024 | 7 | 8 | 82 |
| 2023 | 4 | 5 | 47 |
| 2022 | 7 | 2 | 19 |
| 2021 | 5 | 9 | 106 |
| 2020 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| 2019 | 2 | 7 | 38 |
| 2018 | 4 | 5 | 29 |
| 2017 | 3 | 6 | 76 |

*Table 2, Attendance Data 2017-2024 (ELCA 2024 Trend Report)*

**Attendance and Other [1]**

| Year | Baptized Membership | Baptized Youth Confirmed | Confirmed Membership | Online Worship Attendance | Onsite Worship Attendance | Online Worship Attendance as a % of Baptized Membership | Onsite Worship Attendance as a % of Baptized Membership |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2024 | 617 | 5 | 582 | 79 | 236 | 13% | 38% |
| 2023 | 672 | 7 | 535 | 76 | 238 | 11% | 35% |
| 2022 | 671 | 14 | 541 | 95 | 200 | 14% | 30% |
| 2021 | 647 | 5 | 525 | 86 | 171 | 13% | 26% |
| 2020 | 731 | 4 | 588 | 174 | 99 | 24% | 14% |
| 2019 | 716 | 12 | 641 | | 271 | | 38% |
| 2018 | 722 | 11 | 589 | | 266 | | 37% |
| 2017 | 722 | 10 | 576 | | 278 | | 39% |

Note: Online Worship Attendance is based upon number of devices that hit our Facebook and YouTube sites.

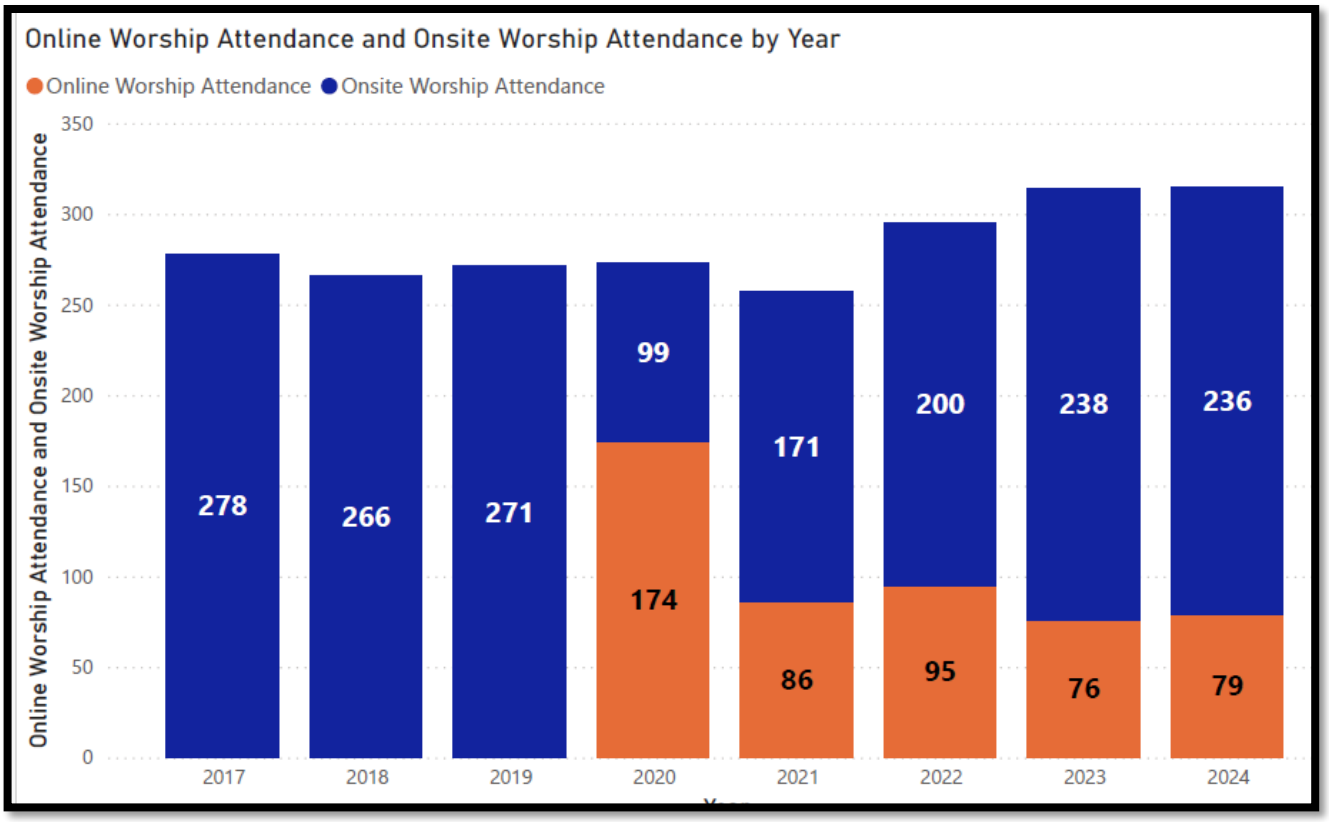


*Figure 6, Faith Lutheran Worship Attendance 2017-2024 (ELCA 2024 Trend Report)*

In-person worship is shown as 236 and online as 79 for 2024 as shown in Figure 6 – an overall increase of just one (1) person. Our Congregation must continue to focus on getting service attendance numbers up in the Post Covid Era. As shown in Figure 7, our baptized membership numbers dropped in 2024.

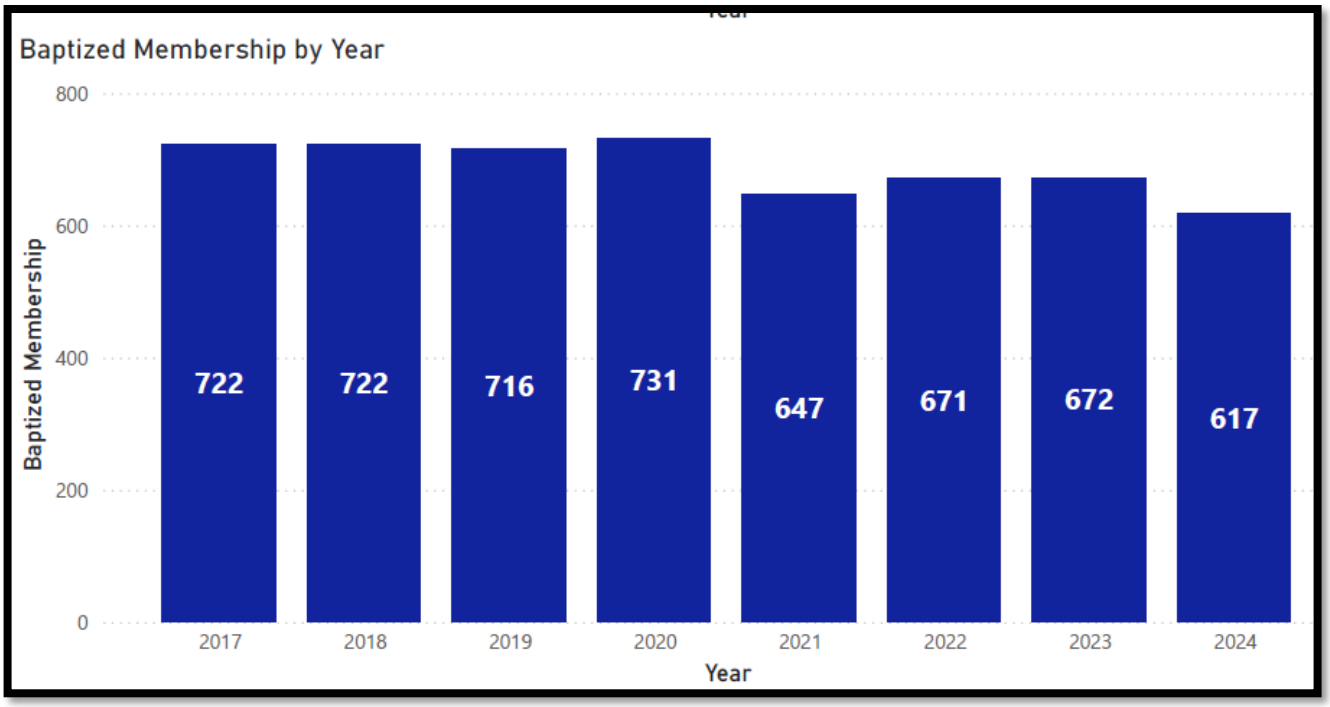


*Figure 7, Faith Lutheran Church Baptized Membership 2012 - 2024*

Financial giving statistics provide insight for the years 2017-2024 in Table 3. This information illustrates the impact of past budget decisions and potential future ones with the Campus Phase 3 expansion and Congregation ministries.

*Table 3, Faith Lutheran Church Giving Data 2017-2024 (ELCA 2024 Trend Report)*

Giving

| Year | Regular Giving by Members | Designated Giving by Members | Grants & Partnership Support | Total Receipts [2] | Current Operating Expenses | Payments on Debts | Total Disbursements |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2024 | $1,696,575 | $116,566 | $0 | $2,666,007 | $595,570 | $101,772 | $2,785,515 |
| 2023 | $773,290 | $194,928 | $0 | $1,037,653 | $615,878 | $42,671 | $1,055,210 |
| 2022 | $756,335 | $282,420 | $0 | $1,279,889 | $591,816 | $132,711 | $1,283,170 |
| 2021 | $1,252,970 | $168,010 | $0 | $2,185,562 | $556,033 | $281,427 | $2,551,391 |
| 2020 | $1,432,928 | $65,014 | $1,500 | $1,718,093 | $569,631 | $0 | $2,949,432 |
| 2019 | $1,513,402 | $72,206 | $0 | $1,671,436 | $677,636 | $0 | $835,128 |
| 2018 | $1,448,573 | $72,037 | $875 | $1,623,043 | $950,797 | $291,415 | $1,425,515 |
| 2017 | $788,736 | $134,653 | $0 | $1,003,343 | $536,957 | $26,336 | $932,343 |

Giving Cont.

| Year | Mission Support | Mission Support as % of Current Operating Expenses, Debt, Expenses & Mission Support | Mission Support as % of Regular Giving | All other benevolence (non-mission support) | Mission Support as % of Total Benevolence |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2024 | $53,798 | 7% | 3% | $89,829 | 38% |
| 2023 | $56,024 | 8% | 7% | $124,892 | 31% |
| 2022 | $50,433 | 7% | 7% | $117,917 | 30% |
| 2021 | $47,109 | 5% | 4% | $52,236 | 47% |
| 2020 | $47,924 | 8% | 3% | $53,668 | 47% |
| 2019 | $47,709 | 7% | 3% | $52,257 | 48% |
| 2018 | $46,240 | 4% | 3% | $60,159 | 44% |
| 2017 | $45,831 | 8% | 6% | $62,063 | 43% |

*Table 4, Faith Lutheran Church Participation by Ethnic Community 2017-2024 (ELCA 2024 Trend Report)*

Participation by Ethnic Community

| Year | African American/ Black | African National/African Caribbean | American Indian/Alaska Native | Arab/Middle Eastern | Asian/Pacific Islander | Latino/ Hispanic | Multiracial | White | Other(Not Available for 2019) | Active Participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2024 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 8 | 11 | 491 | 0 | 515 |
| 2023 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 8 | 10 | 488 | 0 | 511 |
| 2022 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 11 | 468 | 0 | 488 |
| 2021 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 479 | 0 | 488 |
| 2020 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 10 | 542 | 0 | 555 |
| 2019 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 446 | 0 | 446 |
| 2018 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 492 | 0 | 492 |
| 2017 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 501 | 0 | 512 |

- Racial/Ethnicity numbers forwarded from 2015 for 2016

Table 5 offers a snapshot of how our congregation currently supports individuals with disabilities and where we are being called to grow. We give thanks for the ways our building already provides access—such as wheelchair-friendly spaces and assistive hearing devices—and we also acknowledge the areas where our hospitality can deepen. Several forms of support, including Braille and large-print worship materials, sign-language interpretation, mental-health ministries, and specialized faith-formation opportunities, are not yet part of our ministry. Recognizing these gaps invites us into prayerful reflection about how we can better embody Christ's welcome, ensuring that every person is able to participate fully in the life of our church.

***Table 5, Faith Lutheran Church Assistance Provided to People with Disabilities (ELCA 2024 Trend Report)***

**Assistance provided to people with disabilities:**

✓ Wheelchair access throughout building(s)

✗ Braille worship materials

✓ Assistive hearing devices

✗ Large print worship materials

✗ Sign language interpreters

✗ Mental health ministries

✗ Ministry with people with developmental/intellectual disabilities

✗ Specialized faith formation for children or adults

# APPENDIX E – FACILITY PLANNING: CHURCH CAMPUS INFRASTRUCTURE EVALUATION AND EXPANSION PROGRAM

The original Phase 2 of the Facility Master Plan was modified in late 2023 by focusing on the sanctuary remodeling, solar installation, and parking expansion which was completed in 2024. In addition to changing the content of Phase 2, we evaluated taking a different approach to managing our building projects. Previously, we put together high-level plans and cost estimates when going to the Congregation to approve a project. Too often, we had to come back to the Congregation to address funding shortfalls once more detail was known as far as cost and schedule. Our innovative approach entails contracting an architectural firm and a construction manager to develop detailed plans and cost estimates before asking the Congregation to vote on a construction project. The architect develops the building plans/documents, and the construction manager checks those documents to ensure that they meet the client's requirements and budget. Phase 2 also included the installation of a new playground in 2025, enhancing our outdoor space for children and families.

## Phase 3 Building Requirements

Following completion of Phase 2, attention was directed to beginning planning efforts for Phase 3. An effort was made to evaluate the building requirements starting with what was developed during the Facility Master Plan process. Meetings were held with all groups that have activities and missions in the Education Wing and offices of the church. A revised requirements document was developed based on input from those groups. This document will be used as a starting point for the planning effort. In addition, to the building requirements, a lessons learned assessment was completed on Phase 2 and a decision was made to use a construction management approach once again during this phase.

Phase 3 of the Faith Lutheran Church Facility Master Plan focuses on enhancing Faith Lutheran's educational facilities by adding larger and more classrooms. Additionally, it includes the renovation and expansion of the choir room. This phase also addresses security concerns for children attending classes. The old fellowship hall building will be replaced with a new education facility. Artist depictions of the proposed site plans are shown in Figures 8 and 9.

The key requirements for Phase 3 include:

- Ten classrooms for Sunday School and PYC, with rooms large enough to accommodate 20 - 25 people, teacher workroom, storage, activity space.
- Seven offices for staff, a workroom for volunteers, and a meeting room are planned to improve the working environment of our staff and volunteers.
- Seating will be expanded in the sanctuary to accommodate approximately 60 more people.
- A practice room for supporting our music groups which will include storage for music and instruments.
- All classrooms will have storage plus, there will be additional storage for education, office, and building supplies.
- The new building will be all electric to take advantage of our solar capability.

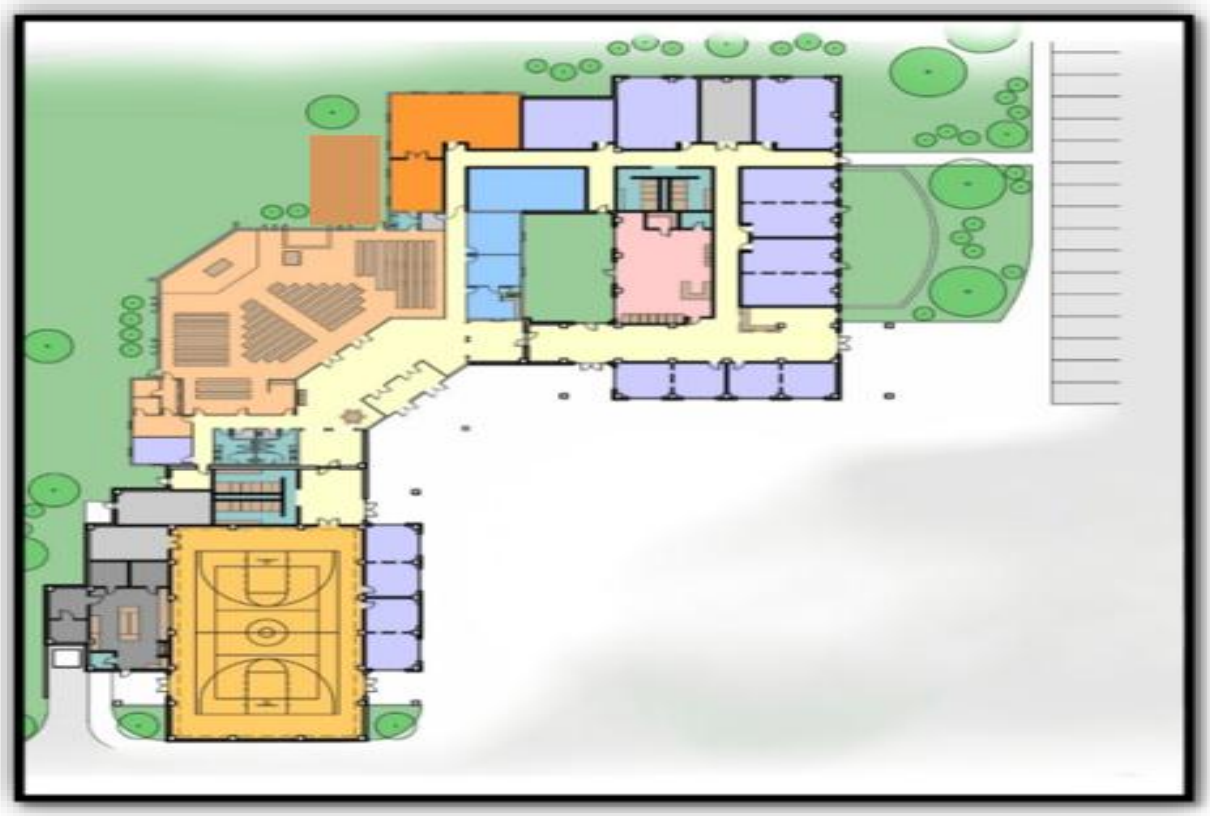

*Figure 8, Proposed Faith Lutheran Floor Plan with Education Wing*

*Figure 9, Artist Rendition - Exterior View of Completed Project*

# APPENDIX F – FIVE YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN OVERVIEW AND STEWARDSHIP ASSESSMENT

## Relationship with the Church Budget

Faith Lutheran's 5-Year Financial Plan is updated annually to keep our resources aligned with long-range ministry and operational goals. The Council uses it as a strategic framework for the annual budget, ensuring decisions reflect anticipated needs and priorities. The plan projects the resources required to sustain essential expenses and support future ministry objectives and includes major liabilities and assets to provide a clear, comprehensive view of Faith's financial position.

## Financial Plan Summary

The Financial Plan breakout, depicted in Tables 6 and 7, is based on the 2026 budget approved by the Congregation, which includes projected giving income of $775,996. Additional revenue from building rentals, capital gains, and interest supplements this projection. Using the 2026 budget as its foundation, the plan applies nominal inflation factors for 2026–2030 and reflects the outcomes of the 2025 Stewardship Drive, Council initiatives, and the Congregation's desire to keep any budget shortfall manageable.

Key elements of the Five-Year Plan include:

- A planned deficit consistent with past execution trends.
- Giving and income assumptions based on recent history, including a 3% increase in active giving households in 2026 due to membership growth and 3% annually thereafter, along with a 5% annual increase in giving per household.
- A 2% inflation factor aligned with the Federal Reserve's national target.
- Staffing levels are designed to support a growing Congregation. With three full-time staff, eight part-time staff, two custodial staff, and seven nursery staff, Faith maintains appropriate staff-to-membership ratios. Current staffing costs exceed the recommended guideline for keeping personnel expenses below 50% of the total budget.
    - Additional updates incorporated into the plan include:
    - New Liabilities and Assets sections detailing current loans and investments.
    - Additional five-year planning factors listed in Appendix C.
    - Staffing adjustments: Worship & Music Pastor added in 2027; Children's Music, Music Coordinator/Director, Choir/Bells Director, and Praise Music Director included Media Operations Director removed in 2025; part-time Accounting Manager added in 2026.
    - Operational updates: solar energy assumed partially in 2025 and fully thereafter; construction loan added in 2024.
    - Budget line adjustments: Capital Maintenance Contingency Fund increased to $9,000 (Line 692); parking lot resealing increased to $1,350 annually beginning in 2028 (Line 960); pension and benefits increased by 5% based on historical trends (Lines 1001a, 1005a, 1011, 1021); fixed salaries and benefits increased (Line 1000).

- The Phase 2 Capital Campaign extends from June 2024 to May 2027. To this point, 105 households have pledged $1,654,288. As of December 31, 2026, Faith received a total of $1,306,316.64 contributions from Faith givers, which is 79% of the total pledges received.

## Stewardship Assessment

The Congregation responded well to the annual stewardship drive in 2025 with increases in the number of pledges and total dollars pledged. This outcome presents a very promising future for our church. Assessing the growth and vibrancy of the Congregation gives us optimism.

- Our new staffing profile, which increases the fixed expenses of the Congregation, comes with anticipation of supporting growth.
- A concern is the projected increase in donations beyond 2026 which is based on an optimistic estimate in giving units and increased pledges. This brings some risk and uncertainty to planning.
- The Council and Congregation need to approach the next few years with increased focus on growing our Congregation.

## Being Good Stewards – Stewardship Board, Finance and Audit Committees

The Stewardship Board and Finance Committee support careful and responsible management of our Congregations time, talent, and treasure. In 2025, the Congregation took a "Leap of Faith" with a substantial budget deficit. While the various boards and organizations held the line on expenses, givers rose to the challenge to put us on a positive path to close out the year. Phase 2 bills have been closed out, and pledges continue to come in ahead of schedule. This should enable the Congregation to pay off the construction loan and save on interest costs. Faith Lutheran is blessed with generous, talented, and devoted individuals. Besides overseeing 2026 budget preparation, holding the annual financial appeal, and engaging the Finance and Audit Committees, we implemented an Investment Policy Statement (IPS).

The Audit Committee for 2025 reviewed Faith Lutheran's and Programs for Young Children (PYC) financial documents and found the records to be well organized and in excellent order. Faith's records review included financial transactions from the calendar year 2024, while the PYC fiscal year ran from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. A copy of their records reviewed, and observations are available in the Congregation Annual Report (Nov 2025).

*Table 6, Faith Lutheran Church 2026-2030 5-Year Budget Guidance Part 1*

| | *Budgeted Expenditures* | 2026 Budget | 2027 Budget | 2028 Budget | 2029 Budget | 2030 Budget |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 100 | Board of Lay Ministry | | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| | Subtotal - Board of Lay Ministry | $ 2,350.00 | $ 2,387.00 | $ 2,424.74 | $ 2,463.23 | $ 2,502.50 |
| 150 | Board of Worship and Music (Growth) | | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| | Subtotal - Board of Worship and Music | $10,100 | $9,711 | $9,823 | $9,937 | $10,053 |
| 200 | Board of Outward Ministry | | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| | Subtotal - Board of Outward Ministry | 3,200 | 3,232 | 3,264 | 3,297 | 3,330 |
| 300 | Youth Faith Formation Board | | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| | Subtotal - Board of Youth & Family | $11,550 | $11,781 | $12,017 | $12,257 | $12,502 |
| 500 | Board of Stewardship (Growth) | | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| | Subtotal - Board of Stewardship | $2,700 | $2,754 | $2,809 | $2,865 | $2,923 |
| 600 | Board of Properties | | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| | Subtotal - Board of Properties | $49,000 | $49,980 | $50,980 | $51,999 | $53,039 |
| 700 | Board of Fellowship (Growth) | | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| | Subtotal - Board of Fellowship | $6,500 | $6,630 | $6,763 | $6,898 | $7,036 |
| | Total Non-fixed (Discretionary) Expenses | $85,400 | $86,475 | $88,080 | $89,717 | $91,385 |
| 900 | Fixed Building/Equipment Expenses | | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| | Subtotal Non-Staff Fixed Expenses | $135,480 | $139,822 | $145,873 | $150,967 | $156,492 |
| 1000 | Fixed Staff Salary/Benefits Expenses | | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| | Subtotal Fixed Staff Salary/Benefits | 481,505.00 | 600,171.96 | 612,283.05 | 624,639.05 | 637,246.04 |
| | | | | 0 | | |
| 1100 | Fixed Support | 0% | 0% | 2% | 0% | 0% |
| | Subtotal Fixed Support | $17,425 | $17,425 | $17,425 | $17,425 | $17,425 |
| | Subtotal - Fixed Voter Expenses | $634,410 | $757,419 | $775,581 | $793,031 | $811,163 |
| | TOTAL DISCRETIONARY & FIXED | $719,810 | $843,894 | $863,661 | $882,748 | $902,548 |
| Benevolence-Synod 8.25% | | $ 63,714 | $ 67,717 | $ 70,707 | $ 73,846 | $ 77,142 |
| Benevolence-Local 1.75% | | $ 13,515 | $ 14,364 | $ 14,998 | $ 15,664 | $ 16,364 |
| | Subtotal - Benevolence | $77,230 | $82,081 | $85,705 | $89,510 | $93,506 |
| **Budgeted Expenditures** | | *$797,040* | *$925,975* | *$949,366* | *$972,258* | *$996,054* |
| **Budgeted Giving** | | | | | | |
| **Budgeted Giving - Plate & Envelope** | | $ 772,296 | $ 820,811 | $ 857,051 | $ 895,104 | $ 935,059 |
| Other Income (Thrivent Choice, Credit Card Award, Interest, etc) | | $ 3,700 | $ 5,001 | $ 5,001 | $ 5,002 | $ 5,003 |
| **Total Budget Giving** | | $ 775,996 | $ 825,812 | $ 862,052 | $ 900,106 | $ 940,062 |
| **Budget Variance** | | $ (21,044) | $ (100,163) | $ (87,314) | $ (72,152) | $ (55,991) |

## *Table 7, Faith Lutheran Church 2025-2029 5-Year Budget Guidance Part 2*

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Phase 2 Liabilities 7% Construction Loan; interest only** | | | | | | |
| Phase 2 loan balance beginning of year | $ 850,000 | $ 388,004 | $ 62,814 | $ - | $ - | |
| Phase 2 Principal paid | $ 503,969 | $ 342,518 | $ 63,440 | $ - | $ - | |
| Phase 2 Loan Interest | $ 41,973 | $ 17,328 | $ 627 | $ - | $ - | |
| Phase 2 loan balance end of year | $ 388,004 | $ 62,814 | $ - | | | |
| Phase 2 Expenses not from loan | $ - | $ - | $ - | | | |
| **Phase 3 Liabilities** | | | | | | |
| Phase 3 Planning | | | $ 100,000 | $ 100,000 | | |
| Phase 3 Construction | | | | $ 500,000 | $ 4,500,000 | |
| **Budgeted Expenditures (from above)** | $ 748,663 | $ 778,403 | $ 811,166 | $ 843,092 | $ 862,781 | |
| **Total Budgeted & New Building Expenses** | **$ 1,294,605** | **$ 1,138,249** | **$ 975,233** | **$ 1,443,092** | **$ 5,362,781** | |
| **Building Fund Pledged Giving Phase 2** | **$ 302,354** | **$ 302,354** | **$ 125,981** | | | |
| **Federal Solar Incentive** | **$ 103,770** | | | | | |
| **Illinois Shines Incentive** | **$ 14,824** | **$ 14,824** | **$ 14,824** | **$ 14,824** | **$ 14,824** | |
| **Electricity bill savings** | **$ 24,000** | **$ 24,000** | **$ 24,000** | **$ 24,000** | **$ 24,000** | |
| **Legacy Giving for Phase 3 (Faith & PYC)** | **$ 1,900,000** | **$ 1,995,000** | **$ 2,094,750** | **$ 2,099,488** | **$ 1,604,462** | |
| **Total Budget Giving (from above)** | **$ 681,538** | **$ 724,111** | **$ 755,266** | **$ 787,980** | **$ 822,330** | |
| **Total Income - Budgeted Giving + Building income** | **$ 3,026,486** | **$ 3,060,289** | **$ 3,014,821** | **$ 2,926,291** | **$ 2,465,615** | |
| ***Equals Variance - Fav (Unfav)*** | ***$ 1,731,881*** | ***$ 1,922,039*** | ***$ 2,039,588*** | ***$ 1,483,199*** | ***$ (2,897,166)*** | |
| *Estimated Giving per Family Unit* | *$2,292.28* | *$2,364.53* | *$2,394.43* | *$2,425.38* | *$2,457.39* | |
| **LIABILITIES** | | | | | | |
| **Phase 2 Liabilities 7% Construction Loan; interest only** | | | | | | |
| Phase 2 loan balance beginning of year | $ 850,000 | $ 388,004 | $ 62,814 | | | |
| Phase 2 Principal paid | $ 503,369 | $ 342,518 | $ 63,440 | | | |
| Phase 2 Loan Interest | $ 41,973 | $ 17,328 | $ 627 | | | |
| Phase 2 loan balance end of year | $ 388,004 | $ 62,814 | $ - | | | |
| **Faith Ctr Liabilities 4% refinance every 5 yrs due 12/16/25** | | | | | | |
| Faith Center loan balance beginning of year | $ 291,000 | $ 275,311 | $ 264,600 | $ 238,944 | $ 200,955 | |
| Mortgage Payment Changes 1/26 | 27,043.32 4% | $29695 7% | $29695 7% | $29695 7% | $29695 7% | |
| Faith Center Principal paid | $ 15,689 | $ 10,711 | $ 25,656 | $ 37,989 | $ 40,721.40 | |
| Faith Center Loan Interest | $ 11,354 | $ 18,984 | $ 18,038 | $ (15,706) | $ (12,973) | |
| Faith Center loan balance end of year | $ 275,311 | $ 264,600 | $ 238,944 | $ 200,955 | $ 160,233 | |
| **ASSETS** | | | | | | |
| Carrolton Bank Money Market | $ 50,000 | $ 50,000 | $ 50,000 | $ 50,000 | $ 50,000 | |
| Carrollton Bank Checking | $ 6,671 | $ 7,004 | $ 7,354 | $ 7,722 | $ 8,108 | |
| Fidelity Investment | $ 456,360 | $ 479,178 | $ 503,137 | $ 528,294 | $ 554,709 | |
| Fidelity Endowment Investment | $ 66,413 | $ 69,733 | $ 73,220 | $ 76,881 | $ 80,725 | |
| Fidelity Investment - Long Term Projects | $ 458,388 | $ 481,307 | $ 505,373 | $ 530,641 | $ 557,173 | |
| Total Assets | $ 1,040,332 | $ 1,092,348 | $ 1,146,966 | $ 1,204,314 | $ 1,264,530 | |

***Financial Planning Factors***

- Music Director and Membercare Minister added 2025
- Part time Choir Director and Brass/Flute Director added in 2025
- Gas & Electric -solar added in 2025, Savings applied to construction loan
- Construction loan at 7% interest added in 2024, treated as liablity
- Federal Solar Incentive (2025) used to pay construction loan
- Illinois Shines Incentive (2025 =2031) used to pay construction loan
- Partime Financial Management Director Position added in 2025, Filled with volunteer, salary added 2027
- Building Fund Phase 2 pledges added, approx $813,000 pledged 2025 -2027
- Planning factors for budgeted giving and income include: recent giving history, a 3% increase in active giving households based on increased membership, and 5% increase in giving per active household.
- Phase 3 Planning starts in 2027 with constrtuction storting in 2028
- 2% inflation factors are applied
- Fellowship funding increased $1,500 in 2026 due to increased demand
- Contracts and Capital Maintenance Contingency each increased $3,000 in 2026 to make up for 2025 reductions
- (Line 960) - Reseal Parking Lot, $1350/yr added in 2026
- (Line 1001a, 1005a, 1011, 1021) Pension/Benefits incre
- Line 1000 Fixed Salaries/Benefits increased

# APPENDIX G – POLICIES, GOVERNANCE, AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

## Faith Lutheran Church Overview

**Faith Lutheran Church Mission:**

**"We, baptized members of the Church of Christ, responding in faith to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, desiring to unite together to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, and carry out God's mission…"**

**Faith Lutheran Constitution Preamble**

Faith Lutheran Church (FLC) located at 520 East Highway 50 in O'Fallon; Illinois is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Central/Southern Illinois Synod. Based upon the available ELCA Parochial Report (lags by one-year) our Congregation is made up of *672* baptized and confirmed members (up one from the previous year), with an average Sunday attendance of *236*. We continue to be a melting pot of different people united through Christ. Our Congregation demographics include - varying ages, genders, and giving units (Appendix B). Our 2026 operating budget is $1,731,881 (with planned increases over the next 5 years), and real property estimated value of about $12-million dollars.

## Congregation Organization

Since establishment, the Congregation always explored and continues to refine its staff organization. We have had both single and two pastor models and since 1991 served as a training parish for interns finishing seminary. Our staffing approach continues to evolve as circumstances dictate. The current Congregation staff organization depicted in Figure 11, with a governing body composed of a President, Vice President, Executive Secretary, Treasurer, and Council made up of eight Boards and other Committees per the Congregation Constitution and Bylaws.

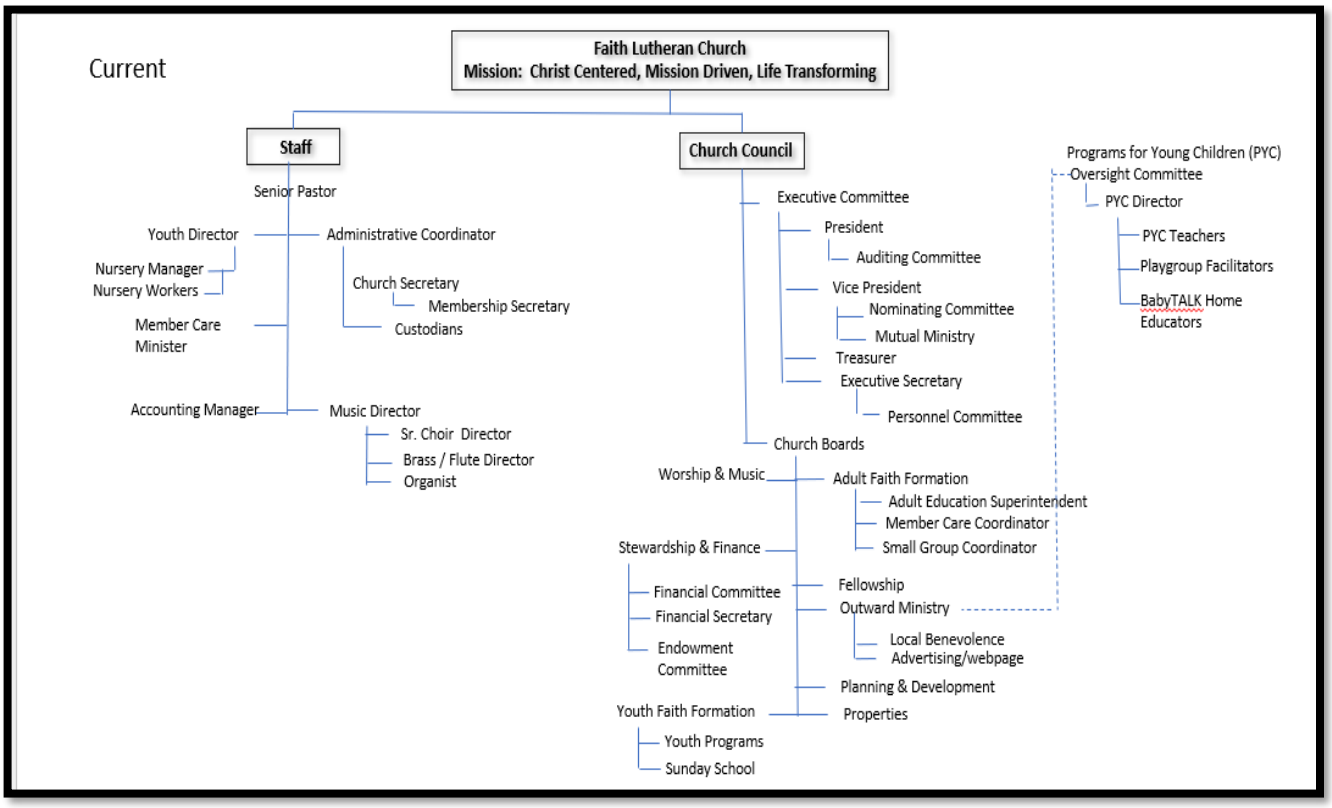


*Figure 10, Faith Lutheran Church Current Organization Structure*

## Church Organization and Governance Study

The P&D Board has wondered for several years if Faith Lutheran's Church Governance structure meets our operational needs. As a result, P&D will undertake a six-month evaluation of its governing structure with the assistance of an external consultant. This review will examine the effectiveness of the current model, assess established best practices within comparable congregations, and identify governance options that best support Faith Lutheran's mission and long-term direction. If the findings indicate that elements of the current constitution no longer align with these best practices or with the operational needs of the congregation, recommended amendments will be drafted and advanced through the formal congregational approval process. The consultant will provide structured analysis and recommendations regarding roles, decision-making processes, and organizational alignment to ensure a clear, accountable, and sustainable leadership framework.

*Figure 11, What is the Optimal Governance Structure for Faith Lutheran?*

## Church Cybersecurity

The P&D Board has identified a growing need to strengthen cybersecurity and data protection across Faith Lutheran's operations. As the church increasingly relies on digital systems for communication, fiscal management, and member information, safeguarding this data has become essential to responsible ministry. The Board intends to evaluate our current practices, identify vulnerabilities, and implement updated security measures to ensure that sensitive information is protected and that our systems remain resilient. This effort will help the congregation maintain trust, support effective administration, and align our practices with modern standards for digital stewardship.

## New Policies Developed in 2025

The Personnel Committee requested the P&D Board to review the church's, "Employee Handbook policy of providing COBRA health insurance for departing employees by using their available sick leave. The P&D Board reviewed the policies of other organizations and determined that a change is necessary. This recommendation was approved by the Church Council in October 2025.

# APPENDIX H – SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCE MATERIAL

## Purpose of this Appendix

This appendix provides supplemental data, historical context, and reference materials that informed the development of the 2026 Strategic Plan. These materials are not intended to restate the plan's core narrative but to offer background information, trends, and supporting evidence for ministry priorities and facility planning.

## Vision and Values

Faith Lutheran Church exists to nourish minds, bodies, and souls in the love of Jesus Christ. This mission guides all ministry decisions and strategic priorities.

Our values are expressed through behaviors that reflect Christ-centered living, mission-driven service, and life-transforming discipleship. These values are visible throughout the Congregation's history (see below and continue to shape our ministries, partnerships, and community engagement. The easiest way to understand the Congregation's values is through the lens of behaviors. Values manifest as behaviors. For instance, if Faith Lutheran has the value of "kindness," then words and actions should be kind. If our Congregation does not consistently act with kindness, then it is not really an organizational value.

The Key Values evident in the Congregation history are the Church Strategic Planning Framework, Facilities (worship and ministry), Music (worship), Education (youth), O'Fallon food pantry/Community Meals (ministry), Staff (worship and ministry), and being Good Stewards of our resources. We continue to grow our community outreach through Community Meals, Habitat for Humanity, and other ministries.

## Faith Lutheran Church Strategic Planning Framework

The Planning & Development Board supports the Congregation's mission by:

- Hosting the annual leadership retreat
- Reviewing staff composition and organizational structure
- Overseeing facility planning and long-range development
- Publishing the Strategic Plan and related policy updates

The Planning &Development (P&D) Board centers its attention on the policies and staff that support our Congregation's mission at Faith Lutheran Church. Each year, the P&D Board has focused on the Annual Church Leadership Retreat, our Building Program, Evaluating Faith's Staff Composition, implementing appropriate policies, and publishing a new Strategic Plan.

Faith Lutheran P&D Board has developed strategic plans since the mid 1990's. The P&D Board embraced and continues to use Callahan's *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church* as a methodology for the Congregation's strategic planning process. Using Callahan's prescribed methodology, we discovered that Faith Lutheran is not a small church but ranks above the 90$^{th}$ percentile among other Congregations. We continue to assess our relative strengths and weaknesses against the twelve characteristics of Callahan:

- Lay Visitation
- Corporate, Dynamic Worship

- Significant Relational Groups
- Strong Leadership Specific, Concrete Mission Objectives
- Pastoral and Resources
- Streamlined Structure and Solid, Participatory Decision Making
- Several Competent Programs and Activities
- Open Accessibility
- High Visibility
- Adequate Parking, Land, and Landscaping
- Adequate Space and Facilities
- Solid Financial Resources.

Our annual planning schedule is used in guiding the planning and budgeting process. We continue to follow these guidelines into 2025 as modified by Church Council instructions. The key activities in a typical Faith planning year are shown in Table 9.

*Table 8, Faith Lutheran P&D Board Annual Schedule*

| Month | Planning Key Events |
|---|---|
| **January** | Annual Strategic Plan Update Published |
| **February** | Council Planning Retreat - New/Refined Goals & Objectives (Variable on Retreat) |
| **March** | Goals/Annual Objectives Refined and Approved |
| **April** | Time and Talent Drive (Stewardship) |
| **May/June/July** | Publication of Goals/Annual Objectives.<br>Tracking of Objectives - Individual Board Activities |
| **August** | 5-Year Financial Plan/Budget Fiscal Guidance to Council/Stewardship |
| **September** | Council Approves Draft Budget |
| **October** | Financial Drive (Stewardship) |
| **Nov/Dec** | Annual Congregation Meeting - 5-Year Financial Plan Updated |

***Accomplishing our mission requires that the Congregation conduct intentional planning.*** Intentional planning is more important than the next program or budget year. Although one cannot accurately predict possibilities for the next 10 to 20 years, one can set some goals and strategy for the next 4 or 5-Years. The task of strategic planning in this process helps to do several things:

- Re-evaluate our mission.
- See our strengths, opportunities, and obstacles to service in our community.
- Focus on future orientation.
- Lead development of realistic, operational goals that are measurable.

***At Faith Lutheran, strategic planning is accomplished for the purpose of considering where we are and projecting where we want to go in Christ's Ministry and to establish Congregational goals that are achievable.*** Faith's current constitution charges the Board of Planning and Development to project a 5-Year period coordinated with the annual plans and budget of the Congregation. The long-range plan

includes areas of ministry, property, and fiscal management. Our Strategic Plan provides a framework for the Congregation and the Council to focus efforts on participation in God's mission through:

- Worship and Proclamation of the Gospel.
- Conducting the Great Commission by reaching out to all people.
- Serving and responding to God's love by meeting human needs.
- Nurturing our members in the Word of God.
- Conserving and utilizing God's resources.
- Supporting the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).
- Supporting other local benevolences.

This plan updates the 5-Year Strategic Plan for Faith Lutheran by reporting the progress made in 2025 towards previously established goals and laying out future challenges. Of course, the key to a consistent and stable annual planning effort is to build on the strengths and accomplishments of the previous year. Accordingly, Faith Lutheran Church's 2026 – 2030 Strategic Plan builds upon the 2025-2029 framework.

## Congregational Survey History

Faith's constitution charges the P&D Board to "canvass the Congregation periodically for the goals the Congregation believes should take priority." Thus, in 1997, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2017, 2019, and 2024 we conducted comprehensive or short surveys of the Congregation to determine Congregation members' views and levels of support. Results of these surveys were documented in the Strategic Plan for those years. There was only one key survey in the past 5 years, it was the Congregation Mission Assessment – Spring 2024.

## Ministry Reference Summaries

This section highlights progress towards various goals and objectives evidenced in the actions and achievements made by the Congregation's ministries throughout the past year.

## Worship and Music

Worship and music remain central to Congregational life. Faith Lutheran supports a rich variety of musical expressions, including adult and children's choirs, handbell ensembles, brass, and praise bands. The addition of a full-time Worship & Music Director has further supported program growth and excellence. Worship and Music enhancements over the past year have strengthened both in-person and online worship. Key highlights for 2025 are:

- There was significant growth in the children's music participation and programs offered to include Summer Music Camps in June and July.
- Field trip by the Bell Choir to play outside of the church and variety of small ensembles at different venues.
- Praise band enhancements using the sound board and "Monday Music Polls."
- Expanding the choir variety of musical styles.
- Growth of the Brass band numbers and expanding the type of musical numbers.
- Adding communion to the fourth monthly service and use of intinction.
- Surge in available acolytes who have been doing an excellent job.
- Hymn selection group.

- Streamlining the multimedia sound board and additional training.
- Assisted hearing training for Congregation members.
- Sponsored a Church-wide Tee-Shirt sale, the proceeds went towards candle purchases.
- Hosted two service projects for Discipleship Week (September 2025). These were the Happy Waivers and a Saturday Sing along at the Colonnade.
- Hosted three Concert Series events:
    - March 21, 2025 – Laclede's Band: An Early Double-reed Ensemble.
    - June 15, 2025 – The Jubilation Choir.
    - July 20, 2025 – Tim Zimmerman and the King's Brass.

## Youth Education and Faith Formation

Sunday School continues to rebuild following the pandemic, with renewed emphasis on teaching children about Jesus through story, song, and service. Key programs include Sunday School, Summer Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Confirmation, Mission Trips, and the "Be Like Jesus" service event.

In Fall 2025, a new initiative "Youth Night" every Sunday evening was launched. A dinner is offered that consistently feeds 50-60 young people and volunteers. The goal is to foster fellowship and ensure full stomachs so families can concentrate on the program without worrying about finding time for dinner. This program expanded to include the Elementary and Middle School Youth Groups.

## Adult Faith Formation

A wide range of Bible studies and spiritual growth opportunities are offered throughout the year, supporting diverse learning styles and schedules. Participation remains strong across men's, women's, and mixed-group studies. In 2025 we saw new leaders step forward in addition to the regulars. Highlights are:

- Growing into Discipleship six-part course.
- In-depth study of Genesis.
- Overview of the Apocrypha
- Both the Men's and Women's Book Clubs are flourishing.
- Raised $800.00 for breast cancer research.
- Sponsored the "Annual Connection Sunday" event to encourage members to learn about fall activities.
- Hosted "New Member Luncheons."
- Provided the quarterly "Word in Season" daily devotional booklets.

## Outward Ministry

This ministry continues to serve a vital connection between the Congregation and surrounding community. This includes Community Meals, the Love Fund, and other outreach and support activities and events. A summary of their 2025 activities and events follows.

## Community Meals

This ministry is part of the Outward Ministry at Faith, was phenomenally successful in 2025. Since January 2012, when Community Meals began, the ministry continues to grow. More cooks, servers and cleaners are always needed as we have 10 positions to fill each week. Figure 11 illustrates this ministry.

*Figure 12, Faith Lutheran Church Community Meals*

Over 46 weeks in 2025, there were 3946 total meals served, with 1891 in-house, 2078 carry-out and 48 additional cartons of food delivered to the O'Fallon Food Pantry. There was a 10% increase in meals served from 2024 to 2025. Historic growth is depicted in Table 9.

*Table 9, Faith Community Meals Historical Summary*

| Year | Total Served | Weekly average | Weeks Per Year |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2025 | 3946 | 86 meals | 46 weeks |
| 2024 | 3450 | 77 meals | 45 weeks |
| 2023 | 2665 | 62 meals | 42 weeks |
| 2022 | 1891 | 40 meals | 44 weeks |
| 2021 | 1569 | 45 meals | 45 weeks |

## Fellowship & Congregational Life

The Fellowship Board supports Congregational connection through meals and events throughout the year. This ministry strengthens community life and supports major church gatherings, seasonal events, and special celebrations. Besides meals and event support they manage the new coffee bar – Figure 11.

*Figure 13, The Faith Lutheran Church Coffee Bar*

## Love Fund

The Love Fund provides crucial financial assistance to neighbors experiencing temporary hardship.

- In 2025, the Fund received 165 calls for assistance and provided over $27,000 in pledged financial aid to 120 neighbors.
- In addition, the City of O'Fallon, in a continued partnership with Faith Lutheran Church, committed over $8,500 toward pledged assistance. Helped our neighbors to sign up for Low Income Household Assistance Program (LIHEAP) from the state and county. The Fund assisted 40 neighbors by emailing LIHEAP application and helped eight (8) of those neighbors submit their application.

## Additional Outreach and Support

Outward Ministry also supports numerous other outreach activities and events. Those in 2025 are:

- Laundry and Shower Ministry.
- Grill to Glory – five events in 2025 with over 25 people at each.
- O'Fallon Food Pantry – the church serves as a drop off point for donations and sponsors and annual Golf Fundraiser.
- Angel Tree for Lutheran Family and Child Services (LCFS).
- Sponsored the 11-week Alpha Course.
- Church "Greeter" program.
- Lutheran World Relief quilt campaign. In 2025, volunteers assembled 75 quilts and 172 personal care kits.
- Restore Network for foster families.
- Presented a Wednesday night "Growing into Discipleship" six-part course.
- Sponsored a Discipleship Week with community service opportunities which included serving a meal at the Ronald McDonald House, Happy Waivers, and a sing-along at the Colonnades.
- We conducted an ALPHA course this fall with eight new members.
- Operation Christmas Child.
- Unity Lutheran School in East St. Louis.
- Community Thanksgiving Meal.
- Continued to keep the Church Website updated and looking fresh and published a church application.
- Sponsored a book signing by Kazuko Blake, a 1945 Hiroshima bombing survivor.
- Collected tithes for Heifer International.

## Program for Young Children (PYC)

PYC continues to provide a play-based, faith-centered, nature-focused environment for early childhood development. They have 73 students enrolled in the Preschool drop off programs and 17 families who attend Playgroup sessions (toddler attends with a caregiver). PYC is well-regarded in the community and supported by a resolute, professionally trained staff. PYC sponsors many events to build strong relationships within their community, such as between teachers and parents, STEAM night, Mother's Day luncheon, Summer Park Play Dates, Hotdogs with Dad, Baby Talk, and others. PYC has a nature play space and hiking trail, a Wonder Lab, a Sensory Garden, and a Toddler Playground. Phase 3 of our facility plan will do a lot to satisfy their current requirements and future expansion.

## Property Board

There are 12 different people that make up the Property Board with many other volunteers that pitch in during as needed. Some of the items that Property Board members are responsible include:

- Exterior of the building, mowing, landscaping, and snow removal.
- Replacement of about 120 air filters annually and cleaning the air conditioning units quarterly.
- Facility repairs as they arise, such as doors, damaged walls, painting, toilets, water faucets, kitchen equipment, vacuums, and Zamboni.
- Oversee computers, security cameras, plus video and sound equipment.
- Paint handicap parking lines.
- Oversee all the electrical, HVAC, and plumbing issues.

# Faith Lutheran Church History Chronology

Faith Lutheran Church's story is one of steady faithfulness, shaped by the people, ministries, and milestones that have carried the congregation from its earliest beginnings to the present day. This chronology traces the key moments that formed our identity—seasons of growth, times of transition, and the Spirit-led decisions that strengthened our mission in O'Fallon and beyond. By remembering where we have been, we honor the legacy entrusted to us and gain a deeper appreciation for the foundation on which our ministry continues to grow.

**May 1962** - Upon the suggestion of the Mission Committee of the Southern Illinois District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, a meeting was held in the O'Fallon High School to discuss formation of a new mission in O'Fallon. Present at this meeting were 20 interested Lutheran people, plus two clergy, and the District Executive Secretary.

**June 1962** - The second meeting was held, which included eight new members. Those attending were unanimous that the Mission Committee be approached to purchase a plot of land. Two sites were under consideration; one north of Highway 50, which consisted of 12 acres and adjoined the high school property; and the second location being the property eventually acquired at Highway 50 and Jamestown Road. Another goal of the group was to make every endeavor to obtain a nucleus of 50 communing members before any definite action was taken in the actual establishment of a mission Congregation.

**July 1962** - The Steering Committee, the Southern Illinois District Executive Secretary, and Pastor Neunaber, Chairperson of the Southern Illinois District Mission Committee, met in the District Office. The property on the south side of Highway 50 was chosen; actions were to begin as soon as practical.

**August 1962** - Since the Mission Committee found it impossible to come to an agreement on either of the two recommended sites, a "Land Purchase Committee" was established which consisted of Pastor W. Wenger, Mr. V. Guebert, and Mr. A. Schnack.

**June 1964** - A special meeting of the District Board of Directors was convened. At this meeting, a proposal was made to purchase seven and one-half acres of ground in O'Fallon for a new mission church, the property being our present site. A down payment was made.

**November 1965** - A call by the Board of Directors of Southern Illinois District was extended to the Reverend Arthur Erb to become a missionary-at-large for the O'Fallon area.

**June 1966** - Pastor Erb arrived to begin his ministry. Services were conducted in the basement of the parsonage.

**March 1967** - The initial organizational meeting of the Lutheran Christians of O'Fallon was held. Ten families were represented at this meeting. A board of officers was selected.

**May 1967** - A name was chosen! Faith Lutheran Church celebrated Charter Sunday on May 14, Pentecost Sunday. The Charter was read in unison by 46 communicant members and 27 children from 18 families.

**September 1967** - The Rev. Arthur Erb was officially installed as Pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, O'Fallon.

**December 1967** - The first meeting with prospective architects concerning the design of a church building was held. Communicant membership was 67, and baptized membership was 111.

**February 1968** - Faith Lutheran Preschool program was initiated. This pre-kindergarten program was designed to complement and supplement the efforts of parents.

**March 1968** - Due to increased attendance at worship services,

The place of worship was changed to the auditorium of the O'Fallon High School. Building plans continued to progress, as the working drawings were ready to be submitted to the contractors for bids.

**May 1968** - The first anniversary of Charter Sunday was observed. Faith Lutheran had 73 communicants and 49 baptized children.

**December 1968** - Groundbreaking ceremonies were held, and construction was scheduled to begin on Monday, December 30.
**July 1969** - Although the structure was not completed, the first worship service at Faith was conducted on Sunday, July 27.

**September 1969** - Dedication Sunday was observed on September 7. The Rev. Herman Neunaber offered the Act of Dedication. The Rev. Edwin Blumenkamp was the guest speaker, and the Rev. Arthur Erb was liturgist.

**September 1970** - A seminary student began field training at Faith.

**April 1974** - The difficulties facing the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod were becoming more evident. The Rev. Herman Neunaber, District President, issued a pastoral letter which was read from the pulpit on Sunday, April 21.

**December 1974** - The Rev. Arthur Erb ended eight and one-half years as pastor of Faith Lutheran Church on December 31.

**February 1975** - The Rev. Jerry Castleman accepted the call to be pastor at Faith.

**March 1975** - Installation of Pastor Castleman was conducted on Sunday, March 9. He was installed by the President of the Southern Illinois District, Dr. Herman Neunaber.

**October 1976** - During the Voters Meeting, the decision was made by an eight majority to join the American Lutheran Church. Members chose to belong to a Lutheran Church body that officially accepted and acknowledged all Lutherans for communion and fellowship.

**January 1977** - As of January 15, Faith became a member of the American Lutheran Church.

**April 1979** - The Rev. Jerry Castleman accepted a call to a church in Valparaiso, Indiana.

**Summer 1979** - The Rev. Gloria Weber and several other clergy administered to the needs of Faith Lutheran Church.

**November 1979** - The Rev. Herman Neunaber was installed as Pastor on November 4.

**1982 to 1984** - A fundraising bond sale campaign was approved and conducted to provide better facilities for worshipers and Sunday School. Carpeting was installed on the sanctuary and classroom floors, and a cloth covering was procured for the reredos. Rev. Neunaber moved his residence from the parsonage to a home in Swansea, enabling use of the parsonage for Sunday School rooms.

**1983 to 1985** - The Worship and Music Committee spearheaded a drive for the acquisition of the Wicks organ.

**May 1985** - The Rev. Herman Neunaber retired from pastoral ministry. During the interim, services and ministries were conducted by pastors who were members of the Congregation: Rev. (Col-Chaplain) Gene Peterson, Rev. (Captain-Chaplain) Perry Bell, Rev. Mike Spaeth, and Vicar Julie Hart.

**October 1985** - A call was extended to, and accepted by, Rev. Dale Houck of Glasford, Illinois.

**Summer 1986** - Faith Lutheran Church engaged Resident Stewardship Services to assist in planning a potential overall building budget. $400,000 was determined to be appropriate in helping the Congregation reach its goal of a membership of 1,000 members with regular worship approaching 500.

**1986** - Beginning of the O'Fallon Food Pantry by the Social Ministry Board; Susan McKean, Chair.

**1987** - Welcomed St. Michael's Episcopal Church, a mission Congregation, into joint use of worship space.

**1987** - Beginning of Kid's Day Out, a once-a-week Christian preschool environment for youngsters whose mothers need some time away.

**1988** - Faith Lutheran Church joined the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and revised the Congregation's constitution.

**October 1988** - The Congregation approved entering a contract with Zion Church Builders, Zion, IL, to design and build a new sanctuary on the existing location. The older sanctuary was to become a Fellowship Hall.

**November 1989** - Groundbreaking ceremonies were held for a new sanctuary. For seven months, members contributed labor, as well as funds toward the building program.

**Pentecost 1990** - Dedication of the new sanctuary. Bishop John Kaitchek, South-Central Illinois Synod, ELCA, presided.

**September 1991** - Faith requested, and was accepted into, status as a training parish for interns, third-year seminarians. The first candidate was Judy Kirchoff in 1991, followed by Rich Brezowski, Heidi Hyland, and Marcie Ludvigsen.

**May 1995** - Pastor Dale Houck announced he accepted a call to Shelby, Ohio, and would be leaving Faith Lutheran Church in June.

**June 1995 to October 1996** - Pastoral Search Committee interviews candidates recommended by the Synod bishop. Revs. Don Klepzig, Major (Chaplain) Kent Bryant, and Randall Scott serve as interim and supply pastors. After an extended search period, Rev. Hubert H. Holm, Champaign-Urbana, accepted the call and was installed.

**1997** - Current membership includes 333 family units (792 baptized, 585 confirmed). Worship attendance averages 235 per week. Annual budget is approximately $236,968.

**Fall 1997** - Handbell Choir is formed. Bells were purchased from memorials and member donations.

**1998 to November 1999** - Study and planning for fellowship hall renovation, an enclosed area between the sanctuary and fellowship hall, a larger kitchen, additional restrooms, Sunday School rooms, and a choir room. Approval to proceed was voted for at the 1999 Congregational meeting.

**2000** - Construction of fellowship hall and other renovation expansions.

**September 2000** - Beginning of regular praise worship services.

**Fall 2000** - Gifts of the grand piano and pipe organ expansion dedicated.

**January 2001** - Newly expanded and renovated building areas dedicated.

**Ash Wednesday 2001** - St. Michael's Episcopal Church moves into their own new building in northern O'Fallon.

**August 2001** - Permanent choir and praise band platform completed.

**January 2002** - Full-time Administrator hired on staff.

**February 2002** - Full-time Youth Director hired on staff.

**Fall 2002** - Programs for Young Children begin with the 2002-2003 school year.

**December 2002** - First Christmas Eve Jazz service.

**2003** - Healing Ministry started. Parish Nurse on staff.

**September 2004** - First Polka service.
**May 2005** - Special Congregational meeting approved the call of Freda Dings as Associate Pastor.

**January 2006** - Special Congregational meeting approved changes to Faith Lutheran Church Constitution and Bylaws as they related to the reorganization of boards.
**February 2006** - First of what has become the annual Music for Mardi Gras tradition.

**December 2006** - Pastor Hugh Holm retired at year end.

**February 2007** - Pastor John Schmeling named Interim Pastor while searching for the new Senior Pastor.

**2007** - Year of financial crunch. Healing Ministry staff position removal and reduced Nursery funding in the 2008 budget were controversial issues.

**April 2008** - Special Congregational meeting to call Pastor Robert Downs as Senior Pastor effective June 1, 2008.

**2009** - ELCA issues human sexuality and ministry policy causing a year of intense study and discussion.

**Fall 2009** - Candice Stone serves as a seminary student during her fall semester.

**August 2010** - Marcia Harty retires from position as Music Director.

**September 2010** - Robyn Runyan selected as Music Director.

**November 21,2010** - Final vote on desired Congregational affiliation because of study of options created by 2009 ELCA statement on human sexuality and ministry policy. Congregation voted to remain affiliated with the ELCA (109-32).

**January 2012** - Beginning of Faith Community Meals.

**February 2014** - Associate Pastor Freda (Dings) Snyder resigned to serve a parish closer to her family home in Pennsylvania.

**June 2014** - Candice (Stone) Wassell called as Associate Pastor and installed in August 2014.

**June 2015** - Beginning of the Faith Concert Series.

**August 2016** - Kimberly Wolfe resigned as Youth Director.

**November 2016** - Jenny Roberts hired as Youth Director.

**April 2017** - Work began in earnest on Vision 20/20 Phase I building project and Building Space for Grace capital campaign.

**August 2017** - Robyn Runyan resigned as Music Director

**August 2017** - Rosalind Stevens hired as Music Coordinator and Andrew Gibb-Clark hired as Senior Choir Director.

**October 2017** - Faith held a joint celebration of our 50th Anniversary and the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.

**August 2018** - Special Congregational Meeting approved architectural plan for Vision 20/20 Phase One Project.

**May 2019** - Special Congregational Meeting approved building contract with R&W Builders for Vision 20/20 Phase One Building Project.

**June 2019** Groundbreaking ceremony held for Vision 20/20 Phase One Building Project.

**July 2019** - Pastor Bob Downs (Senior Pastor) retired.

**November 2019** - Dave Filkins resigned as Praise Band Director.

**January 2020** - Michelle Rose hired Praise Band and Children's Music Director.

**February 2020** - In-person worship suspended for the first time in Faith' history due to Covid 19 Pandemic. Online services began almost immediately. In-person PYC classes were also suspended for the remainder of the year.

**February 2020** – Covid Recovery Team created.

**June 2020** – In-person with Covid 19 Restrictions resumes.

**August 2020** – Wendy McDonnell (church secretary) retired.

**August 2020** – Nicky Casberg hired as Church Secretary.

**August 2020** – Pastor Candice Wassell called as Senior Pastor.

**January 2021** – Jess Whatley hired as Children's Christian Education Director

**July 2021** – Michelle Rose resigned as Praise Band & Children's Music Director. Andrew Gibb-Clark assumes the Praise Band Director role the following month.

**August 2021** – Michael Whatley hired as Multimedia Director.

**September 2021** – Vicar Brian Moeller began his one-year seminary internship.

**November 2021** – Final Occupancy Permit granted on Vision 20/20 Phase I Building Project.

**January 2022** – Rosalind Stevens retired as Music Coordinator.

**January 2022** – Ribbon Cutting Ceremony held for new Faith Center and completion of Vision 20-20 Phase I Building Project.

**June 2022** – In response to post-pandemic worship attendance, Sunday morning worship was reconfigured to two worship services at 9:00am and 10:30am. Both are traditional with the Praise Band playing as an ensemble at each service in an alternating schedule.

**September 2022** – Vicar Brian Moeller concluded his one-year seminary internship.

**October 2022** – Jessica and Mike Whatley resigned from staff in PSC move to Tampa, Florida.

**November 2022** – Congregation approved creating a called Worship & Music Pastor position

**January 2023** – Andrew Gibb-Clark resigned from staff as the Choir Director, Bell Choir Director, and Praise Band Director. Heidi Polett was hired as interim Choir Director. Kristin Runyan was hired as interim Children's Music Director. Roz Stevens was hired as interim Bell Choir Director and Praise Band Director.

**April 2023** – Search opened for Worship & Music Pastor position.

**September 2023** – Matthew Polett was hired as interim Brass Band Director and Faithful Flutes Director. Angelina Sill was hired as interim Children's Christian Education Director.

**September 2023** – Congregation approved in a special Congregational meeting to proceed with next steps in Phase 2 building program.

**May 2024** – After a successful "Preparing Space for Grace" capital appeal, the Congregation approved in a special Congregational meeting to commence work on Phase 2 building program.

**June 2024** – The Youth House was demolished and parking lot remodel begun.

**August 2024** – Kristin Runyan was hired as the full-time Worship & Music Director. The decision to call another full-time pastor was put on hold indefinitely.

**October 2024** – PYC installed a playground in the "front yard" of the campus, off HWY 50, for toddler and nursey use.

**November 2024** – Our newly remodeled Sanctuary was Dedicated to the Glory of God in worship on Sunday, November 3, 2024. Principle construction for Phase 2 is complete.

**January 2025** – John Hellrung was installed as the part-time Member Care Minister.

**February 2025 –** Jenny Roberts resigned as Youth Director. Alexis Farmer hired as part-time interim Youth Director.

**April 2025** – Wayland Schue (organist) and Faith parted ways, and search began for a new part-time organist.

**May 2025** – Kathy Turner was hired as the full-time Youth Director.

**November 2025** – Moving forward with Phase 3 building planning was approved by the Congregation at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

**December 2025** – Alexis Farmer joined Faith, again, to serve as a quarter-time Youth Group leader, Kathy Turner reduced her position to a three-quarters time Youth Director.

**December 2025** – Pastoral Acts in 2025 included 3 Baptisms, 10 receiving First Holy Communion, 8 Confirmed, 39 New Members received, and 11 Funerals conducted.