

# *Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church Annual Report*

## *2023*



 **PHINNEY RIDGE**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH



Reconciling in Christ  
Congregation

Thank you for taking the time to read this annual report. As we've learned this year more than ever, your participation and engagement in the whole life of this congregation really matters.

This is *your* church, and you as members hold the overall stewardship of our ministries and resources. These reports have been compiled with great care and thoughtfulness, and we welcome your feedback, questions, and continued dialogue. The staff and council of this congregation are committed to transparency and openness, and we hope you will see that reflected here. We also changed up our report format this year, to share in photographs *The Story of 2023*. As we celebrate, remember, ponder, and give thanks for this year of ministry, we know that this is only one step on God's path for Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church. Enjoy this story, and please remember that you are an important character in it!

~ Respectfully submitted, Your Staff

## *A Letter from Pastor Anne Lohrmann*

Dear friends in Christ,

I report that the state of Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church is: "Beloved."

During 2023, I have witnessed this in a variety of ways- in how you show up and give so generously to this place; in how our community responds to our presence and we to theirs; and in how you care for one another with such grace and love. I have been blessed to serve alongside you in these ways.

My position allows me to witness how much you love God's church. I want to thank all of the musicians and others who make worship happen each week; I give thanks to God for your talents and time. And for those who simply *come* to worship, whether in person or online, thank you, too. As Deacon Patrick often says so eloquently, we are a more complete reflection of God's world because of *your* presence. Worship has been a highlight for me this year, as it always is, and planning with our current team is regular, efficient, and joyful. You gathered for worship at least 66 times, by my count, and throughout the year attendance continued to climb, culminating in a Christmas Eve worship attendance of more than 500 people! God is definitely speaking to and stirring us each time we gather, and is feeding us to go out and be the Body of Christ we are formed and called to be. I see you loving this place because you *show up*, not only for worship but for community gatherings, meetings, volunteer opportunities, work parties, education hours, midweek ministries, and so, so much more. When you aren't showing up, you're donating like crazy! Money, time, resources, food, clothing, and more money...you give generously for the sake of our work together, and every dollar is used for this mission. Thank you for loving this community through your presence and generosity. I take the responsibility of stewarding these treasures very seriously and have worked to help improve communication and good stewardship over this year, working with an excellent Stewardship team, the staff, and council fluidly.

I also experience - especially as a member of this neighborhood myself - how this church has become beloved by our community. We are a safe haven and gathering spot for many outside groups, including numerous choirs and 12-step groups, Lutheran Counseling Network, Scouts, theatre groups and more. I often meet neighbors at the grocery store or bank or post office who are familiar with Phinney for one reason or another. These community members remember gladly how we have hosted Tent City, or they've come to our Trunk or Treat location as one of many neighborhood partners, or they've attended a concert, or they've received financial or emotional support from us, or bus tickets. We are known as a positive member of this community, and we always strive to do even better in that regard. I foster relationships with all of the groups and leaders who use our spaces, and have helped improve communication and collaboration as much as I can from my seat.

PRLC is, most importantly, beloved *by* God. And I see you reflect that love in the way you care for one another, too. I'm so amazed by the strength of this community to show up for one another in times of need, distress, and grief. You visit one another, provide car rides and meals and visits, and cheer each other on or give a tearful hug in due season. In the many months of this congregation's pastoral transition and budget conversations, you always met to have authentic conversations, ask questions, and help one another understand various perspectives. You never turned this into a slough of gossip or toxicity, but chose to walk together in love through this time in our history. You love one another as God has first loved you, and that is a trend I only see gaining strength and momentum.

I supervise the Director of our preschool, Matt McKenzie, and I am proud of our school and the incredible ways Matt has grown and improved that ministry. The PRLC Preschools employs 25 staff members and serves more than 60 households. I enjoy working closely with teachers, students, and parents and have begun efforts to strengthen our collaboration and relationships. This work will continue strongly into 2024, and already has.

As your pastor I have walked with you through births, deaths, illnesses, job losses, hurt feelings, grief, anger, and more. In 2023 I tried to spend about half of my weekly hours *outside* of the church office, making visits meeting in person with parishioners for holy conversation and prayer. It is always my deepest privilege to be in these spaces with you, and I can confidently report that being your pastor through these life moments is my greatest joy and honor. Thank you for trusting me with your hearts and lives. This year we grieved the death of 10 beloved members, and we continue to grieve. We welcomed 4 Children of God through baptism; 14 adults and 1 confirmand through affirmation of baptism; and 2 new members through transfer. We transferred out 6 members. We held 7 funerals, and I buried several other friends of the congregation. No weddings. We consumed probably 50 gallons of soup. We held 8 potlucks. We don't know how much pizza there was. We gathered for Pickleball, picnics, an ice cream social, a neighborhood block party, game nights, burials, work parties, birthday parties, food distributions, and so much more. We consumed about 400 loaves of home baked communion bread.

When I spent funds outside of basic worship supplies in 2023, it was to facilitate moments of grace and love to those in need, like bringing a nostalgic eggnog latte to a grieving, isolated member who received the simple gift with tears in their eyes; purchasing comfort or practical items for members who have no other person to help them while they're hospitalized; sharing a meal with someone who needs a companion to share their deepest hurts or spiritual distress; or occasionally offering a hotel room or warm meal to an outreach client in need. I personally entered into a loan agreement with PRLC to resolve the debt that was preapproved and incurred during a family crisis (as well as some sabbatical grant overage). Thank you for the financial trust you give me; I am a careful steward of this trust.

I'm most proud of how our staff has adapted and come together through a difficult time of transition. While I was sad to see Nicole Meyer leave her position as Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries, I was inspired by the CYF Taskforce and their thoughtful work in crafting an updated job description that incorporated the needs and desires of our congregation. God provided us with David Roby to fill the position on an interim basis until the congregation has the opportunity to affirm this position long-term. Working with David and Deacon Patrick to plan cohesive seasons of worship and education has been a highlight of my time at Phinney, as we are a collaborative, creative, and like-minded team with enough difference between us to serve our congregation fully. They are amazing colleagues!

I know that this isn't meant to be a "State of the Church" report. But I wrote my report this way because I truly want the congregation to know that I see this place as very healthy and thriving. Yes, we have work to do to implement better policies and procedures, and we have difficult conversations behind and ahead of us. But the overall picture is bright for Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church. I hope to continue bringing a pastoral perspective to these conversations, offering truth in love, grace, and experience to the table through all things. I confess that being an Associate Pastor without a Lead Pastor is a challenge at times, but my prayer is that I have inhabited this space with integrity and strong leadership as I've been able. Please know that I am always eager for conversation with you. I appreciate honest feedback and open dialogue, and whether you know it or not, I am constantly praying for you with genuine love in my heart. I ask the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire me as we share this beautiful mission of bringing Jesus' love to a world in need.

*"I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus." - 1 Corinthians 1:4*

*-Pastor Anne Lohrmann*

## Outreach in 2023

From my view on the perch overlooking PRLC's outreach efforts, 2023 unfolded in strikingly usual and unusual ways. The usual column contains the great work of volunteers in the food bank who gave of their time, resources, and love muscles to provide 37,894 pounds of food to 1,264 households reaching 3,314 people in need. Wow!

Another stone-cold miracle we are all very used to is the generosity flowing into and out of the PRLC Outreach Fund. In 2023, your contributions to the fund totaled \$42,117. Wow, again! From that pool of generosity, we extended help by directly paying housing costs for 100 households, utility bill assistance for 13, a tank of gas for 25, and miscellaneous help for 4 more. All 142 of those households faced an unstable future, took the risk of asking for help, and found us prepared and waiting with the gift of stability. This is the gospel of Jesus in action!



One unusual surprise forever embedded in my memory of 2023 appeared in the form of a cistern to collect rain water in Kenya. To be more specific, this is "our" cistern in the courtyard of St. Tabitha Orphanage and School in Kibera, Kenya. The short version (longer version is in the November 2023 Tower Echoes newsletter) of this story starts with your generous donations to our 2023 Lenten offering, continues with

our partner organization *Friendly Water for the World* who organized the cistern project, and concluded with beautiful messages of gratitude from St. Tabitha's students directly to us. Wow, once more!

One very unusual circumstance of 2023 brought challenges to our shared outreach work. The difficult process that led to Pastor Bryon's departure last spring, and the ensuing reshuffling of workloads to absorb not just his absence but other instances of staff turnover and illnesses, kept my focus off of outreach work more than previous years. I didn't at all mind stepping into other roles and providing consistency in a time of upheaval. I found it very rewarding, in fact. But this extra work made it much harder to engage with the ministries celebrated above and many others. I enter 2024 with a determination to prioritize time for outreach clients first, and then keep the outreach focus prominent in everything I do so as to honor my call to serve PRLC as your Deacon of Outreach.



Many other blessings from 2023 come with me into the new year. To engage our neighbors, I worked hard to exhibit the collection *Stations of the Cross: Mental Illness* by Pastor Mary Button on our front lawn during holy week. I shared a simply fabulous time taking in a Mariner's game with many of you in August. And we enjoyed a beautiful sunny October day for a robust Trunk-or-Treat offering again on our front lawn as our contribution to the neighborhood Hunger Goblin' Trick-or-Treat event. I'm grateful as can be for the opportunity to do this work together.

In Peace,

Deacon Patrick Meagher

## *A Note from Our Bishop*

Dear Beloveds in Christ,

This last year has been both wonderful and difficult. It has been filled with joys and sorrows, laughter and tears, connections and disruptions. It has been a time of starting new ministries and, sadly, working with five congregations as they closed. This last year has been both life-affirming and exhausting.

As I reflect on this last year and look to 2024, I hold close one of my favorite scriptures: For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39

Sometimes when we are anxious or concerned, we forget to trust that God is present and active. That God is here with us – through all things – and that nothing will separate us from this. We might forget this when we are busy figuring out budgets and salaries, church maintenance and worship attendance. We might have arguments and exhaustion might creep in.

But these verses help us remember that the focus is always on Jesus and God's love for us through Jesus. After all, the church was not created in order to "be church." We don't exist just for ourselves or to keep a business running. Instead, the church exists in this world because we have encountered Jesus. And knowing Jesus, trusting Jesus, loving Jesus, nothing is ever the same. As authors Root and Bertrand write in *When Church Stops Working*, "The church is the gathered people who are in the world, like Paul, and who have experienced the acts of God through an encounter with Jesus Christ." (p. 74)

Root and Bertrand further write:

Paul starts churches not for the sake of churches, not to stave off decline or accelerate growth, but for the sake of forming communities that serve the world by witnessing to God's acts in the world ... It is the community that rehearses and narrates the story of God's acts for the world, waiting together for God's coming again in the return of Jesus. (p. 75)

In other words, the church is a community formed because of an encounter with Jesus and who gather to practice and share what God is doing in this world through the Holy Spirit.

As you gather for your Annual Meetings, I encourage you to have conversation about what it means to be church today:

1. What is God doing in your community today?
2. What does an encounter with Jesus look like for you?
3. How are you practicing what God is calling you to do and to be?
4. What does Romans 8:38-39 mean in your life and your congregation's life?
5. How are we waiting together in the mystery of God's presence now and into the future?

I am grateful for all of you and I thank you for the honor of being your Bishop. May we trust that through all things God is with us through Jesus and God's love shines through all.

God's abundant blessings on your annual meeting and throughout 2024.

+Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee





# Children Youth and Family Ministries

What was the focus/story we told last year?

Last year we focused on relationship and community-building, then shifted to building trust and joy during the transition between CYF Directors.

What did we do to engage in that story/focus?

## *Highlights from Nicole time*

- Ash Wednesday Family Worship
- Youth & Children storytelling at Easter Vigil
- As a youth group during the Spring, we attended many different high school musicals and concerts to cheer each other on!
- May Youth Weekend at Holden Village  
Blessed a LOT of graduating high school seniors with quilts! 12 I think!
- Summer Camp at Lutherwood
- Family Camping Weekend at Lutherwood
- Youth Greenlake Boating Day
- End of Summer BBQ at Golden Gardens
- Flat Jesus followed PRLC people all over last summer and was a fun way to share adventures and stay connected

## *Highlights from David time*

- The “Affirming Five” Confirmation events
- Trunk or Treat
- Caregiver’s Night Out (first of many)
- Game Night (first of many)
- Fall Youth Retreat at Camp Lutherwood
- Friendsgiving
- Intergenerational Advent Event
- “Advent Well Spent” Wednesday meals and Holden Evening Prayer



“Trunk-or-Treat”- PRLC 2023

## Nitty Gritty

Although we are few in number, we’ve got consistent family fellowship and...what’s that?...I think I hear some growth around the corner. Yup. It’s true. New and returning families have been walking thru our wide open doors recently, and we’re grateful for the integration of new fellowship into our Phinney Phamily, aren’t we? *\*God’s people say “AMEN”\**

Budget-wise, we did GOOD!!! We have positive funds instead of negative ones and the prospective future looks good. We’ve gotten good at utilizing the resources we have available and spending as little as possible while increasing budget transparency.

## THANK YOU!!

A HUGE thank you to all of you who have helped CYF ministries here not only survive but thrive. I am proud of our congregation for fulfilling Christ’s mission by investing in meaningful connections and resources for families. Shout out to a few folks who have consistently provided food, taught Sunday School, provided feedback, and attended events. You are appreciated and I hope you feel that every day.

-David Roby



# *Congregation Council Report*

2023 was a rather tumultuous and difficult year to be part of the leadership at Phinney. At the Annual Budget Meeting on January 29, the congregation sent the budget proposal back to the Council to be reworked into one without a deficit, hence more accurately reflecting our financial realities. In the midst of that work, the Council was realizing the need to work with Pastor Bryon Hansen about his lack of helpful leadership, and, after much difficult conversation, a letter was drafted asking him to consider resigning. We coordinated with Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee on this process so as to do it in the best way possible. A letter was delivered to him in the bishop's office on March 23. The Council continued its budget work and prepared a recommended motion to the congregation to be presented during the Annual Election Meeting on May 7. After that time Pr. Hansen did resign as Lead Pastor at Phinney, and we celebrated his ministry among us on June 4. The new council convened on July 1 and began setting into place the next steps for this time of transition. Again, the bishop worked closely with us to determine the best placements for transition leadership. We invited Pastor Maynard Atik to serve as Transition Facilitator, shepherding the nuts and bolts of preparing for calling a pastor. Pastor Al Berg joined the staff as Ordained Pastoral Assistant to support Pastor Anne Lohrmann in the needed pastoral work in the community. Nicole Meyer resigned as our Children, Youth, and Family minister. In September the Council hired David Roby to a program-year appointment (through May 2024) in that position. The Council has outlined significant work on various areas where policies and procedures need updating. Currently, teams are working on the Parsonage Agreement, Credit Card Use, Continuing Education Procedures, Building Use Contracts and Invoices, and Spending Policies. A group is also working with the Preschool to strengthen and clarify our relationship with this important ministry of our congregation.

We established the Building and Grounds Committee (affectionately known as "BAG") which is doing a terrific job taking care of our aging building and its much needed improvements. A Finance Committee has been established, chaired by the Treasurer. This committee assists the Treasurer and the Parish Administrator in developing the budget, and you'll see their great work at the Annual Budget Meeting.

I am grateful for the work of members of the Congregation Council: through June, 2023, Jenn Boelter, Renee Dudley, Thaddeus Gregory, Matt Langston, and Cara Scheffler. Beginning in July, 2023, including continuing members, Nancy Winder (President), Martin Kaste (Vice-President), Luci Baker Johnson (Secretary), Barb Mockett (Treasurer), Lori Chrisman, Ted Hunter, Thea Kaste, Theresa Magelssen, Linda Ramsdell and David Rice. (David Rice was appointed to finish the term of Cara Scheffler who resigned in September.) Ted Hunther resigned in November, and the Council has appointed Karen Fossum to that term beginning February 1, 2024.

Phinney has a lot of organization work that needs attention. As noted above, the Council is working on many of these areas. I am thankful to our remarkable staff for hanging in there in the midst of many changes and difficulties, continuing to lead us in everything that makes this congregation wonderful. I pray that 2024 will be the year to bring new coherence and cohesion to our work together.

In Christ,

Nancy L. Winder

Congregation President

## *From Parish Administrator Ann Erickson*

2023, my second full year of being PRLC's Parish Administrator, was a year of deep-diving. A combination of a global pandemic, four administrators in eight years, and other staff transitions, has led to institutional knowledge loss or a break in continuity for much of what I touch. The Parish Administrator position has three main areas of work: finance/accounting, human resources, and building/property management.

**Budget.** At the usual January budget meeting, the budget was sent back to the Council. There was much "real-talk" about our giving, our expenses, and the state of our reserves. A revised budget, with a reduced tithe to the synod (down from 10% to 7%), a reduction in staffing dreams, and no anticipated use of reserves was passed in May. Special thanks to our ad-hoc budget review committee: Barbara Mockett, Bart Brosten, Julie Carr, Ruth Nielsen, and David Rice, with help from Pete Carlson and Lowell Johnson as well.

**Insurance.** Our insurance company required a six page questionnaire about our facilities, operations, and policies. We then received a letter with recommendations including replacing a sub panel in the furnace room, using a metal flammable liquids storage locker, installing a class K fire extinguisher in the main kitchen, and having a formal, written abuse prevention policy in place. The Building and Grounds Committee took care of each of these facility items. The new Safe Haven Policies shepherded through by David Roby updated our abuse prevention policy. We also raised our buildings' insurance values to \$16.5 million for the church and \$800,000 for the parsonage.

**Transition.** With each transition comes the flexing and/or changing of responsibilities, new team-building, and, of course, reviewing of how we do things and how our processes could be improved.

**Financial Blessings.** 2023 was a year of financial blessings. We received some significant one-time gifts to help support our staff as we grappled with our budget and transitions. We also received significant gifts from two estates: the estate of Carol Steen and the estate of Virginia Schafer.

**Building and Grounds.** Our Building and Grounds team did significant work, including most notably repairing the chapel roof, researching and ordering a new boiler – along with the abatement work that comes with it, a newly-striped parking lot, trees taken out of the East side of the parking lot, and responding to a water situation in the Parsonage.

**A Few More Notes.** Thanks to the vision of Preschool Director Matt McKenzie, and a retention grant and preschool surplus funds, preschool staff began receiving retirement contributions – and being able to set aside their own retirement in a 403(b) account. In 2024, modest retirement contributions will be included in the budget. Teams Galore! In addition to the new Building and Grounds Committee, 2023 also saw the start of a new Finance Committee, and a renewed Audit Committee to join the Endowment Committee and the Personnel Committee in providing support to the Congregation Council and the Parish Administrator. Significant organizational work happened in 2023, and the groundwork has been laid for more in 2024. Finally, thanks to all the volunteers who made the behind-the-scenes work happen. I look forward to working with you all on laying a good foundation for our ministry to continue.

# 2023 End of Year Financials

<b>Parish Income</b>	<b>2023 Budget</b>	<b>2023 Actual</b>	<b>2023 Difference</b>
Offerings	898,613	846,968	(51,645)
Other Income	181,730	185,036	3,306
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>1,080,343</b>	<b>1,032,004</b>	<b>(48,339)</b>

<b>Parish Expense</b>			
Total Expense	1,080,241	1,004,957	75,284

<b>Parish Net</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>27,047</b>	<b>26,945</b>
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<b>Preschool Income</b>			
Tuition & Fees	1,401,810	1,413,308	11,498
Other Income	33,000	32,560	(440)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>1,434,810</b>	<b>1,445,868</b>	<b>11,058</b>

<b>Preschool Expense</b>			
Total Expense	1,434,117	1,444,185	(10,068)

<b>Preschool Net</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>1,683</b>	<b>990</b>
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<b>Total Net</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>28,730</b>	<b>27,935</b>
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<b>Our Main Dedicated Funds</b>	Beg. Balance		2023 Transfer		Balance 1/1/24
	1/1/23	2023 Receipts	2023 Expense	Out (In)	
Building Fund	15,025.11	3,825.38	9,447.96		9,402.53
Preschool Savings	12,510.35		-	-	12,510.35
Preschool Scholarships	16,250.00			(3,000.00)	19,250.00
Preschool Surplus	76,500.86		62,016.32		14,484.54
Chancel Decorations	4,090.03	2,261.24	1,229.27		5,122.00
Coffee Cart	5,782.14	40.45	58.85		5,763.74
Food Bank	47,296.17	20,064.23	14,118.36	12,380.00	40,862.04
Loan Repayment			2,330.27	3,052.35	(5,382.62)
Memorials	5,193.95	12,735.00	4,740.18	100.00	13,088.77
National Youth Gathering	-		1,200.00		(1,200.00)
Outreach Fund	11,692.48	42,117.40	45,902.57	-	7,907.31
Parsonage Project (Endow. Distribution)	46,056.53		-		46,056.53
Proceeds from 2020 Sell of PH	108,853.09	20,193.79	-		129,046.88
Quilters	426.69	605.00	1,105.19	(2,000.00)	1,926.50
Schafer Estate (Capital Improvement)		177,637.48			177,637.48
Steen Estate (Food Bank, Roof, Boiler)	-	655,805.33	23,362.55		632,442.78
<b>All Dedicated Funds</b>	<b>364,411.26</b>	<b>945,041.51</b>	<b>175,800.17</b>	<b>6,478.31</b>	<b>1,127,174.29</b>

	<b>Jan. 1, 2023</b>	<b>Dec. 31, 2023</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Assets</b>			
Operating Funds	<b>0.00</b>	<b>32,577.14</b>	<b>32,577.14</b>
Reserves	14,896.58	14,896.58	0.00
Dedicated Funds	364,411.26	1,127,174.29	762,763.03
Endowment	961,906.79	1,015,384.60	53,477.81
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>1,341,214.63</b>	<b>2,190,032.61</b>	<b>848,817.98</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>	<b>7,719.60</b>	<b>11,566.42</b>	<b>(3,846.82)</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>1,333,495.03</b>	<b>2,178,466.19</b>	<b>844,971.16</b>



Reconciling in Christ  
Congregation

As people made one in the waters of baptism, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community that welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, Language circumstance, marital status, political perspective, race and sexual orientation. Whether you are a believer, doubter, or seeker, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

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**Beth Ann Bonnecroy**, Chancel & Handbell Choirs Director

**Nick Abbott**, Organist

**Craig Hopper**, Gospel Choir Director

**Paul Georgeson**, Youth Choir Director

**Walter Zamojski**, Videographer/Photographer

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### **Congregation Council**

Nancy Winder, President

Martin Kaste, Vice-President

Luci Baker Johnson, Secretary

Barb Mockett, Treasurer

Members-at-large:

Thea Kaste, Youth Rep

Lori Chrisman

Karen Fossum

Theresa Magelssen

Linda Ramsdell

David Rice

This congregation worships on the ancestral and contemporary homeland of the Coast Salish peoples. We recognize the profoundly sacred relationship that our Native siblings have with the land and ask for forgiveness for the ways we have violated that which is revered by them and sustains us all.