



## *2023 Annual Report*

PREPARED FOR THE FEBRUARY 4, 2024,  
CONGREGATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING  
NORTH PARK COVENANT CHURCH



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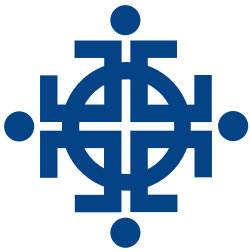


# From the Denomination

December 2023

Hello, Covenant Family,

Thank you for the many ways you have been partnering and praying with me and the Covenant denominational team this year. I send each of you my gratitude and thanks! We have been through a significant season of change and are just at the beginning of living into a new ministry structure. It is my hope and prayer that these changes will allow us to resource and partner with you more intentionally as together we join God in God's mission to see more disciples among more populations in a more caring and just world.



Please know that our denominational team is praying for you too! Each of our ministry teams has selected a regional conference to pray for this year. If you would like to send your prayer requests, we would love to receive them. We want you to know there is a concerted effort to lift you up in prayer. This is one of the many ways we can live into our Three Strand Strong commitment. I pray our good and faithful God will provide for all your needs and amplify the many ways you demonstrate the love of Christ in word and deed in your community. I pray you will be encouraged even when circumstances are challenging, knowing that God is always at work. I pray the joy of the Lord will be your strength.

The psalmist writes, "Your love, O Lord, forever will I sing; from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness" (Psalm 89:1). It is an honor, privilege, and joy to serve the Evangelical Covenant Church. This past year has been full of experiencing God's faithfulness to his beloved church; from the wonderful church anniversaries being celebrated to 100 years of the gospel coming to the Democratic Republic of Congo, God has been faithful. What a magnificent God we serve! Please continue to share your stories of how God is at work in and through your congregation. We love to celebrate these stories with you. They are a gift and encouragement to the whole church! Looking forward, I am excited to see how God will meet our youth as they gather for Unite 2024. I know there will be new and renewed commitments to Christ as well as responses to God's call to ministry and service.

I pray every blessing upon each of you this Advent and Christmas season. As you gather in your local church annual meetings, may you reflect and marvel at God's faithfulness to you this year.

For God's glory and neighbor's good,

Tammy Swanson-Draheim, President,  
Evangelical Covenant Church

# From the Conference

January 2024

Happy New Year! We are grateful to the Lord for each of the pastors, congregations, and many ministries of the Central Conference. Please know that we are praying for the 110 churches, over 300 ministers, and the movement of the Holy Spirit in the Central Conference.

We are gearing up to move forward in ministry in 2024. How do we do this? The Church is called to seek the lost, to empower the weak, to care for the sick, to disciple the believer, and to challenge the status quo. We continue to do this, while we also strive to plant churches, help strengthen current churches, walk with ministers, and continue to provide guidance to our conference ministries. We can only do this with your faithful partnership and contribution.



**CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF THE  
EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH**

Paul, in Philippians 1:6, reminds us that we are in this together. “Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Post-pandemic, churches are creating their new normal and growing comfortable once again in the mission of the church, to gather those who need the hope of Jesus Christ. This is the perfect time to “move mission forward” together, as this continues to be our theme for this year.

Church plants in our conference are also continuing to move forward in mission after the pandemic. We are seeing the movement of the Holy Spirit through the many people coming to Christ. These new believers are being baptized and joining the church to grow spiritually in community.

Things we accomplished together in 2023:

- In 2023, the Central Conference staff helped over 70 local Covenant pastors obtain their Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC) credentials.
- We also walked alongside six Covenant ministers from our conference as they went through the ECC ordination process. These local ministers were ordained at the Covenant Annual Meeting (Gather).
- We continue to walk with churches in the Central Conference that are seeking interim/transitional pastors and we offer coaching to these pastors as they step into these roles.
- The conference staff assisted four churches in 2023 with finding interim and transitional pastors. The staff is currently assisting two other churches with finding interim and transitional pastors.
- Currently there are eight Central Conference churches seeking lead pastors. The conference staff is walking alongside these churches’ pastoral search committees. Ten churches completed their search process in 2023 and have called new lead pastors.
- We continue to walk alongside three church plants, with the possibility of adding two church

plants in our conference in 2024.

- We are checking in with our Covenant ministers on a regular basis. In 2023, the conference staff did more than 60 care check-ins with local Covenant ministers.

- We assist local churches as they look for information and resources that develop their ministries. This includes the pHCheck, which is a church assessment tool, as well as Vitality workshops, Leadership Team discernment, and Living Legacy coaching. The conference staff is available to answer any questions you have about resources for your local church.

- Rev. Jill Lind concluded her time with our conference, and we are so grateful for her commitment to care for ministers and lay leaders. Rev. Nicole McClurg is now walking with our ministers.

- The Central Conference staff is just an email or phone call away. Feel free to contact the Central Conference office at [info@centralconf.org](mailto:info@centralconf.org) or at 773-267-3060.

This year, the Central Conference is planning to hold the conference annual gathering, Celebration 2024, as an in-person event, until we are told otherwise. **Please save the dates: Thursday, May 2 - Saturday, May 4, 2024, at Batavia Covenant Church, in Batavia, IL.** We hope Covenant church members can make it to this very special event. We will gather to do Central Conference business, moving mission forward in our conference. More details will be sent to your church shortly, but you may also visit our website at [www.centralconf.org/celebration](http://www.centralconf.org/celebration) for updates. At Celebration 2024 we are committed to sharing the good news coming from local Covenant churches in our conference. Great ministry is happening all around the Central Conference!

Please know that we cannot do ministry without your prayers and financial partnership. We are empowered by the local Covenant churches in our conference to move mission forward. However, we cannot continue to plant, strengthen, and connect churches without your support. You may find more information on donating to the Central Conference at our website: [www.centralconf.org](http://www.centralconf.org) (click on the “Contribute” option).

Finally, we thank you, the local Covenant churches that are giving to the Central Conference from church budgets at 3.5% of the local church giving. If you have been unable to do so before, we invite you to become a financial partner with the ministries of the Central Conference now. We also invite you to consider giving additional funds, as the Holy Spirit leads you.

*“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”* Ephesians 3:20

Grateful to be in the family of God.



Rev. Dr. Danny Martinez

Superintendent of the Central Conference of the ECC

# Statistical Report

ANN-MARIE O. FRISK • CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR

## Children Born into the Church Family

Brayden Trey Huebner, born January 8, 2023, to Linden Christ and John Huebner\*

Isla Grace Taylor, born March 17, 2023, to Cody and Lauren Taylor

## Members Received on June 4, 2023

Angélica Ahlman	Antonio Pizarro
JP DeNeui	Michael Shawn Sanders
Sarah Hillabrant	Lauren Wargaski
Bonnie Pfeiffelman	Paul Wargaski
Eric Pfeiffelman	

## Members Lost through Death

Karen Snow\*\*, February 20, 2023, Chicago, Illinois

Roger Nelson, March 18, 2023, LaValle, Wisconsin

Claire Cole, March 23, 2023, Northbrook, Illinois

Fredrick Holmgren, May 24, 2023, Chicago, Illinois

Paul Larson, September 20, 2023, Northbrook, Illinois

Robert Milostrazich, October 24, 2023, Chicago, Illinois

James Hosek, December 3, 2023, Chicago, Illinois

## Transfers of Membership

Kandace and Richard Bergstrom, to Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Monroe, Wisconsin

Frances Fostey, to Redeemer Covenant Church, Orangevale, California

<b>Total Membership at the end of December 2022:</b>	477
Members received in 2023	9
Members lost through death	7
Members lost through transfer	3
<b>Total Membership as of December 31, 2023:</b>	<b>476</b>

\* non-member

\*\* associate member

# From the Church Chair

JOEL OLFELT

In 2023, we celebrated 125 years of God’s work in and through North Park Covenant Church, and we worked to find out where God is in action so we might participate in God’s Kingdom work, now and in the future. The 125th-anniversary celebration committee, under Chuck Olson’s able leadership, put together our February 4 dinner celebration with NPCC members and friends. This celebration included an encouraging video message from denominational President Tammy Swanson-Draheim and in-person congratulations from Conference Superintendent Danny Martinez. We told stories, we sang, we remembered God with us, and we were energized by Donn Engebretson’s introduction of the Building with Faithfulness campaign. Throughout the year, the 125th-anniversary committee invited us to engage with the past, present, and future of our sacred spaces, our music, and our spiritual community. Many thanks to the committee for this gift!



Through the gifts of God’s abundance, the able leadership of our pastors and staff, and the faithfulness of our congregation, North Park Covenant Church is a vibrant Christian community. With the assistance of Central Conference Finance Officer Steve Dawson, we applied for and received approximately \$200,000 in Employee Retention Credit funds to be used by North Park Church Cooperative Preschool and by the congregation. In this past year, NPCC welcomed nine new members, we met and exceeded our 2023 budget, we listened for God’s guidance in building Christian community now and for the future, and we reached out to our neighbors in Christ’s name.

Building Christian community at North Park requires attention to both the physical and the spiritual. We thank Christian Schuetz for always preparing building spaces so well for the wide array of work, play, and worship activities of NPCC members and friends. We thank Ann-Marie Frisk for keeping NPCC communications, calendars, and logistics working so smoothly, and we thank interim bookkeeper and treasurer Joline Paska for her faithful financial work. We renewed our commitment to Christian community at North Park at our January 22, 2023, congregational meeting by voting to launch our three-year Building with Faithfulness campaign to fund repairs to our sacred space (sanctuary east wall), strengthen our ministry to youth and our community (new pastoral position), and renew our connections with our larger community (tithing of contributions received). We prepared the campaign, co-led by Samantha Johnson and Sandi Kersten, during the spring and summer, and we launched it to the congregation in September. As of January 2024, NPCC members and friends have raised contributions and



pledges totaling approximately \$935,000. We are now working with BTL Architects to receive bids, and we are preparing a job description for the new pastoral position. We expect to bring the bids and job description to the congregation in the early months of 2024, and we continue to accept pledges and donations.

Many thanks to our pastors, staff, and volunteers, who minister so well in our community! In



2023, Co-pastors Libby and Jeff continued their stable and insightful leadership, and Jeanette Mottl continued as youth director. JDrew McGovern was with us as young adult ministry director and high-school youth intern in the spring, and in the fall, volunteers from the congregation have connected with North Park University students by having a Sunday noon meal with them in our large conference room. After six wonderful years of ministry through music, Dominic German resigned as chancel choir director, feeling that the combined changing responsibilities of his life were leading him in new directions. In December, the congregation and choir celebrated his time with us and committed to staying in touch. We are grateful to Brian Ward for stepping in as interim chancel choir director and to Sunwoo Lee for serving as interim organist; we have formed a search committee that is now beginning work to identify our next chancel choir director.

Together we have been building Christian community in many ways in 2023. Sometimes we remembered 125 years as a church, sometimes we planned for the future. Sometimes we welcomed new members and friends, sometimes we cried because of the pain of a loss. We are being church in a rapidly changing world. I pray that, in this rich time of change, we will continue to look for the best paths of engaging with the community and world around us, and that we will continue to live into our motto, “For God’s Glory and Neighbors’ Good”.



# From the Co-pastors

JEFF HUNTER & LIBBY PIOTROWSKI

## Overview

As we write this report for the Congregational Annual Meeting Part I, we are well into our eighth year as co-pastors. We write with an overwhelming sense of gratitude, joy, hope, and anticipation for all that has been and all that will be, and we continue to seek God's guidance and Spirit. While COVID-19 is still rearing its ugly head, we have had a very real sense of "returning to normal" in these last months, and we remain so very grateful for the body of believers that is North Park Covenant Church; for the ways in which this community is a family to one another through life's joys and difficulties. In what follows, we will attempt to give a comprehensive summary of ministry at NPCC over the last year from our perspective, but we freely admit that it is not exhaustive.

## Worship

Throughout 2023, NPCC continued its long and rich tradition of sacred, meaningful, thoughtful, lectionary-based worship. The rhythms of the church year bring so much to our shared lives, and we remain grateful for the weeks of Advent spent waiting for the hope and light that comes to us in the Christ child, the days of Christmas and weeks of Epiphany in which we can bask in the glow of Christ's light and reflect on what it means to be a follower of Christ, the weeks of Lent in which we take time to reflect on the ways we have not been faithful and steadfast, the roller coaster ride that is Holy Week, the joys of Easter, and those weeks of ordinary time in which we focus on the life and ministry of Jesus as seen through the eyes of the Gospel writer Matthew. We give thanks to all who work so hard to make worship flow well each week; our musicians, our tech team, and Ann-Marie. We hope that all who worship with us feel welcomed and can sense God's presence with us.



## New People

One of the joys of life at the church in the past year has been that new people continue to find their way to us and connect with our people and our ministries. Particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic, when more and more people nationally are disconnecting from church, it is a joy and responsibility to invite, welcome, and connect people to our communi-

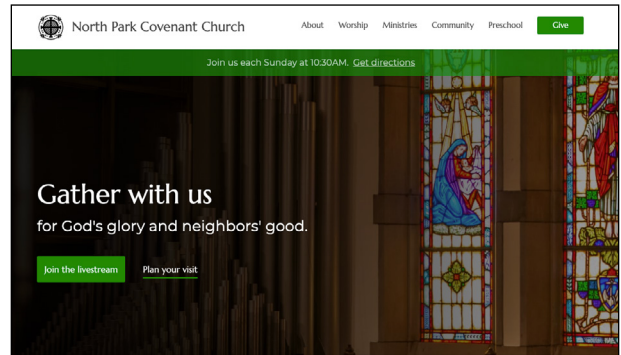
ty. We rejoice that in 2023 the church has made new connections, new friends of the church, new members, new leaders, new ministries, and more. Over the course of 2023, we welcomed nine new friends into membership.

## *New Technology*

As we rolled into the fall, members of the staff began joking, “You know, Fall Launch is not very busy in the church. We should probably add a little extra chaos into the mix just to keep us all on our toes.” The jokes kept us going, and we introduced some amazing new tools into the mix.

After years of preparation and small changes, we launched a complete ground-up redesign of the church website in September 2023. The web address ([www.npcovenant.org](http://www.npcovenant.org)) stayed the same, but everything else changed. New color schemes with liturgically seasonal flourishes, new images and words to tell the story of the church, and new frameworks for keeping important information accurate and fresh were all part of the new look.

Not only did the long-awaited new website make its arrival in the fall, years of preparation also got us to the point where we were ready to transition to a new backend technology system, too. We moved from ACS Technologies’ legacy system to their new, cloud-based church software platform, Realm. Realm is now providing us with an integrated and modern solution for our church’s financial system, people database, and internal communications. The rollout has not been perfect, but for an information systems change that touches so many of our core processes, it really has been smooth and successful. You can get logged in and [check things out here](#).



## *125th-anniversary Celebration*

North Park Covenant Church celebrated its 125th Anniversary in 2023, and we celebrated well! The celebration began with a delicious banquet on February 4 in Hamming Hall on the North Park University campus. The meal was catered by Tre Kronor, and all who attended enjoyed delicious food, fellowship with many they had not seen for some time, and wonderful storytelling, in video form, about the history of the church and its mission in the neighborhood.



This banquet launched into a year of celebrating, and what a year it has been! Brian Ward took some of us on a tour of the organ during the Musical Machinery & Munchies event, Dave Schlensker led multiple groups on a tour of the sanctuary’s stained glass to share its

history and meaning, Kevin Anderson invited us to a screening of the church's [World War II Retrospective](#), and we gathered items and artifacts all year to fill a beautiful 50-year time capsule created by Wally Ebner, which was sealed on December 20, 2023.

We are so grateful for the work of Matt Werner, who took the creative lead on helping the church tell and capture some of its stories in this 125th year. We took time to reflect together on the ethos of the church and the ways we have journeyed in faithfulness, and [the videos that capture those stories are beautiful](#). Additionally, we invited people to share their own memories and imagine us into the future in a small series we entitled "[I Remember/I Imagine](#)".

As this anniversary year comes to a close, we say a hearty thank you to Chuck Olson, the chair of the 125th-anniversary planning committee; to Sandi and Dave Kersten, Christine and Joel Olfelt, Kay Olson, Kevin Anderson, Samantha Johnson, Susan and Dave Dawson, Donn Engbretson, and Dave Schlensker who served so capably as committee members; and to all who came out to celebrate the past and to dream our way into the future.

### *All-church Events and Community Relationship Building*

We continue to prioritize the gathering of the whole church for fellowship and growth, and we love seeing the church young and old, visitor and member, extroverted and introverted gathered together. A key moment in our church's life that creates this space is our weekly Wednesday-night Gather meal. Pastor Libby has led the charge to create space for the community gathered around the table, and youth ministry, music ministry, adult formation, and more have connected with this community to support and expand their programs. This commitment to being a church together extends into our quarterly Intergenerational Sunday School gatherings, our early and late summer block parties, our town halls to discuss big ideas and decisions with each other, and more.



We also have continued to build relationships with one another as we have worked to further outreach to and relationship with the community. In early 2023, we began a partnership with Exodus World Service, a Christian not-for-profit organization that helps to settle refugees new to the United States. Together, we built a welcome pack for the Yusof family and helped to set up their new apartment so they could feel as at home as possible when they first arrived. That partnership continued with a small group of us becoming new neighbors to the family and continuing in relationship with and support of them.

As 2023 wore on, the city of Chicago began to see the arrival of large numbers of Venezuelan immigrants arriving by the bus-full. The City bought the Marine base at 3034 W. Foster and began to house migrant families there. So, in effort to help these brothers and sisters in Christ,



and in partnership with the Hollywood-North Park Community Association, we began a collection of blankets to be delivered, in addition to clothing and winter apparel and basic necessities. Further, following an all-church rummage sale in October (thank you, Susan and Dave Dawson!), we invited families living at the shelter to come and take what they needed. It was an amazing experience all around.

### *Staff and Lay Leadership*

We remain so deeply grateful for the hard working staff at North Park Covenant Church. We are blessed to have a team that enjoys working together and is continually supportive of one another; we've even been known to socialize occasionally! Ann-Marie Frisk continues to do excellent work as our church administrator. She is organized, efficient, and flexible, and she helps us to keep all of the balls in the air! Christian Schuetz is a master gardener, and we are so grateful for the beauty he brings to our yard and surrounding property. Christian also keeps things running, quite literally, inside the building; from cleaning toilets to unloading the dishwasher, from repairing broken things to hanging new artwork! Jeanette Mottl has done wonderful things with our middle- and high-school youth groups. We are appreciative of her gentle and creative spirit and her teamwork and flexibility on our staff. She has also done a great job helping to mentor new interns during her tenure with us.

At the end of 2023, we had to say goodbye to Dominic German, our chancel choir director for the last six years. Dominic is a skilled and gifted musician and leader, with a remarkable voice and a relaxed demeanor. We will miss him and the excellence he brought. As we search for a new choir director, we look forward to having Sunwoo Lee serve as our interim organist and Linnea Olfelt serve as our interim bell choir director. Both of them bring gifts to those positions. And, as always, we remain grateful to Brian Ward, whose gifts run the gamut from excellent piano and organ playing to wonderful contemporary music leadership to chancel choir directing and organization and the coordination of it all. He is a master, and we are thankful to him for his willingness to step into the choir director role as we search for a new person to fill that position.

And, we would be terribly remiss not to mention the wonderful leadership of our Executive



Council members, as well as all of the board leadership, in 2023. This team of lay leaders is invaluable and have done, and continue to do, a remarkable job of doing the work of the church! A special shout-out, too, to Joline Paska for taking on the immense job of bookkeeping (as well as serving as treasurer), particularly through this latest backend transition. We are very grateful!

### *Conference and Denominational Life*

North Park Covenant Church continues to invest in our relationship to the conference and denomination with our pastoral staff taking full advantage of the relationships and resources that come from being connected to our local ministerium cluster, our conference leaders and communities, and the denominational gathering, Midwinter.

In January 2023, NPCC sent Pastors Libby and Jeff and Youth Director Jeanette Mottl to the Midwinter Conference in Jacksonville, Florida. It was a wonderful week of connecting with other pastors, learning and refreshment and we are grateful that NPCC sees the value in allowing its pastors to participate.

We also sent our full complement of delegates to the Annual Meeting in June in Garden Grove, California, supported by the co-pastors. It was a great team of delegates who handled well the joy and the struggle of such a meeting. They were particularly impressed with the importance of the church's decision around restructuring and in choosing to remove Awaken Covenant Church from the denomination. Through conversation, written reports, and a town hall meeting, the delegates and church lead-

ership have helped the church to prayerfully digest the happenings in our larger church and to ponder how to apply our efforts and energy within the denomination.

### *Looking Ahead*

As we look ahead, our minds turn to the Building with Faithfulness campaign launched in 2023 and carrying us forward for the next three years of ministry together. The discernment process the team led the church through was to make the innovative move of combining a building need with a staff need and a community need and insist that it would be possible to address all of these needs in a holistic invitation to partner together to make a difference in all these fronts.

As we move into 2024, we are receiving bids for restoration work on the east sanctuary wall and stained glass, creating a job description and a recruiting process for a new member of the pastoral staff to help lead us into the future, and getting excited about how we will give ten percent of the almost \$1-million pledge to support good work and good people in our neighborhood.

We are so grateful for you and so excited for the ways the dive-bombing bird of the Spirit is driving us forward into God's good work in the world.



# From the Youth Director

JEANETTE MOTTL

Youth group is happening in full force! As you may have noticed, our lively middle-school youth group brings lots of enthusiasm to our church on Wednesday nights! We have fun each week playing high-energy games, gathering for lessons, and having small-group discussions. High-school youth group on Sunday nights focuses more on discussions and group check-ins.

## Looking Back

I continue to be grateful for the work I get to do with our students. Being able to spend time with them each week and support them in various aspects of their lives is my favorite part of this job. We've seen the middle-school youth group grow quite a bit as students continue to bring friends, and the smaller, more relaxed high-school group has made for many fun Sunday evenings.

As with last year, the middle-school youth group started the year by tackling some big questions. They asked questions such as, "Why do we even read the Bible?" and "Why is God so forgiving?" and brought up topics surrounding relationships and how to deal with drama. The high-school youth group spent some time looking at Peter's journey as a disciple. We remarked week after week how Peter's genuine, but often misguided, attempts at following Christ often mirror our own. We found hope, however, that he continued to learn and be used by God. It is such a blessing to be able to hear and engage with the thoughts and opinions of these young people!

We also had the opportunity to do some activities outside of church this year! Over the summer, we embarked on our annual trip to 6 Flags (above) and kicked off the school year by packing meals at Feed My Starving Children (left). Outdoor Cafe continues to be our favorite meeting spot, and the teamwork and creative thinking of the high-school youth group were tested during a trip to an escape room!

## Looking Ahead

One major thing we're looking forward to in 2024 is attending the ECC's youth conference, UNITE (formerly CHIC). In July, we'll head to Bowling Green State University in Bowling

Green, Ohio, for a week of community building, worship, and fun! Thank you to everyone who has supported us in our fundraising efforts, and stay tuned for some more that are coming up!



## Youth Ministry Interns & Leaders

Youth ministry at North Park could not be done without the work of our interns and other leaders. In August, we welcomed Gordon Battles (top right) as our high-school ministry intern and Zayd Vestal (lower right) as our middle-school ministry intern. We have also been blessed with some incredible volunteers! Middle-school leaders include Ella Darrow, Marlene Espinoza, Aylin Garcia, Jeff Hunter, Chloe Johnson, and Jackie Little. High-school leaders are Katie Gustafson and Jon Starr. It has been wonderful to work with this team of people! Their commitment to this ministry and love for our students is deeply felt and appreciated!



# From the Board of Christian Formation

HELEN ARKEMA & CHRISTINE OLFELT • CO-CHAIRS

As we study together, as we are community together, as we work together, and as we worship together, we are formed as Christians, and we participate in the reign of God. We are grateful, as always, for the excellent work our pastors do in forming Christians in our congregation, in many ways making the work of our board straightforward and fulfilling. Please read their reports for their activities, which we supported in children's Sunday School (Pastor Libby Piotrowski), Confirmation studies (Pastor Jeff Hunter), and work with youth (Jeanette Mottl). JDrew McGovern provided ministry to our young adults during the first half of this year, as well. We also have a sizable group of volunteers who teach, bake, clean, counsel, set up, and tear down. And so we were formed as Christians in 2023.



As usual, our board has supported children's Sunday School, Vacation Bible School (left), and our youth in fundraising for UNITE (formerly known as CHIC), including donating baked goods to a sale during our 125th-anniversary rummage sale. We have supported the disbursement of camping scholarships (a current challenge is to get children registered for camps before they fill up) and arranged staffing for the childcare rooms during the Sunday worship service, Christine Olfelt

has prepared three intergenerational Sunday school events, and we have been blessed by several ongoing weekly Bible studies and our prayer group. We have provided a church liaison to the North Park Church Cooperative Preschool Board, supported the summer block party and other special events included with the Gather dinner (although we gratefully let Libby do the cooking!).

New in 2023, we have contributed to the 125th-anniversary celebration, notably through Samantha Johnson's organization of a children's art installation (right), given input on the job description for a new pastoral position, hired two childcare workers to alternate in the toddler room during Sunday worship (this combination of one volunteer and one regular hire provides continuity for families), supported Linnea Olfelt as she organized post-worship lunches for college students, and sponsored the curriculum *The Wired Word* for adults each Sunday. It examines a topic from each week's news in light of our faith and scripture. We have reworked and implemented portions of our Child Protection Policy to provide more agile screening of volunteers and employees who interact with minors, and Libby organized some all-church events to keep us in fellowship over the summer.



# From the Board of Community Concern

KRISTEN STARR, CHAIR

The Board of Community Concern works to connect our church with the people in our neighborhood and to minister to those in need while working to keep our church family aware of our neighborhood's news, activities, and concerns.

Our most significant and long-term involvement has been with The Friendship Center, our local food pantry outreach. The Friendship Center is a full-choice food pantry that provides groceries for 4,500 people every month, a number that has more than doubled in the past year. Their service area includes the Albany Park, Lincoln Square, North Park, Ravenswood, and West Ridge neighborhoods. The Friendship Center provides access to short- and long-term needs for those at risk of being food insecure. By assisting with SNAP applications and/or making referrals to our community nonprofit and healthcare partners, The Friendship Center can connect folks with job training, counseling, legal advice, and underinsured healthcare to allow them to overcome other challenges they may face. The pantry operates four days a week and serves hot meals on Thursday evenings. Delivery service is available for seniors and homebound individuals. They also provide pet food once per month. More information about The Friendship Center can be found at [www.friendshipcenterchicago.org](http://www.friendshipcenterchicago.org).

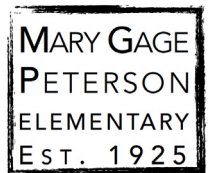


We have continued to support Hibbard Elementary School, contributing to the school in ways that meet the varying needs of the students. While one of their greatest needs has been to find volunteers to serve at the school, we have not been able to help in that way. Our contributions are used to supplement programs that are otherwise not covered by Chicago Public School funding. This past year, we worked together with Principal Hiliana León to collect school supplies for needy students and families. Hibbard School is very grateful for our generous support of their children.



**William G. Hibbard Elementary School**

Peterson Elementary School is the closest elementary school in the neighborhood. Our members are involved in various ways supporting school events and fundraisers at Peterson. In addition, we are pleased to reintroduce our NPCC/Peterson School Tutoring Program this year. Christine Olfelt has stepped up to direct the program and is actively seeking tutors and students to increase the number of participants in this neighborhood ministry.



The Board of Community Concern continues its relationship as members of the Hollywood North Park Community Association (HNPCA). Over 700 people are living in shelters in our neighborhood, 500 of whom have settled in the former U.S. Marine base at 3034 W. Foster Ave. NPCC pastors and members from the BCC have worked together with the HNPCA, Alderperson Samantha Nugent, State Senator Ram Villivalam, and other community organizations to distribute clothing, blankets, and more to shelter residents. This year, HNPCA chose to



donate funds to The Friendship Center and spent funds directly in support of migrant families by purchasing needed items. We have been happy to offer our support to this community organization through donations and financial gifts. More information about HNPCA can be found at [www.hnpca.org/](http://www.hnpca.org/).

Our church is also a member of the North River Commission (NRC), whose mission is to improve the quality of life in our community by developing affordable housing, quality education, arts and cultural endeavors, open spaces, and thriving neighborhood businesses. The Board of Community Concern helps to publicize activities from this organization as well as others that our congregation may be particularly interested in. This past year, our focus has been to collect donations of clothing and other items for the large number of migrants and homeless families in the area and deliver these items to the NRC for distribution. More information about the NRC is available at [northrivercommission.org/](http://northrivercommission.org/).



*Our annual Halloween Hot Chocolate and Walking Taco stand, recently dubbed Night of the Walking Taco, was a major hit again this year, despite the chilly temperatures.*

# From the Board of Deacons

GAIUS BERG & MARY CHASE-ZIOLEK • CO-CHAIRS

The Board of Deacons exists to support the care ministry of the church. This year, we have continued to provide that care in the following ways:

## *Assisting pastors in praying for and connecting with members and friends*

We have created a deacon care list, dividing our list of church members and friends among the deacons, who then contact those on their list to make connections, provide support or prayer, and be available to answer questions. One task we have been working on is updating our list to determine who continues to be active in the church. We also have had the tradition of taking flowers to members and friends who are unable to get to church before Christmas and Easter. This is always a rich opportunity, for both those who deliver the flowers and those who receive them, to share care and stay connected.

## *Prayer ministry*

Prayer is a vital part of our life together. In addition to the prayer support organized through our deacon care lists, the prayer ministry includes prayer vigils for our church, our community, and the world; the prayer tree has been used in worship as another way to name our prayer concerns; and we have continued to pray our way through our neighborhood this past year.



**PRAYER MINISTRY**

## *Benevolence fund*

The generosity of our church members and friends creates our benevolence fund to help folks in times of need. The deacons participate in decisions on how this fund is used. This year, there has been an increased need for gift cards. We have also been able to provide one-time support to several individuals with outstanding bills, and we helped provide funds for a cremation.



## *Providing receptions for memorial services*

One way we care for our members and their families is by providing receptions for memorial services. In 2023, the deacons hosted four receptions as we celebrated the lives of departed friends Roger Nelson, Claire Cole, Fred Holmgren, and Jim Hosek.

## *Preparing and serving communion*

Preparing and serving communion is an important part of deacon responsibilities that supports our worship life.

Deacon Board members this year have been Gaius Berg (co-chair), Cheryl Borgeson, Mary Chase-Ziolek (co-chair), Wally Ebner, Sandy Edstrom, Louise Hedstrom (moved in October), and Lynn Pearson. Brad Thompson and Barb Goode left the board in May 2023, and Sue Anderson and Sara Wendt joined us.

# From the Board of Trustees

DAVE DAWSON & ANDERS JOHNSON • CO-CHAIRS

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the management and upkeep of church facilities and for the financial oversight of church operations and expenditures. The Trustees also collect, count, and deposit the church offering each Sunday.

In March, the Trustees painted and renovated areas on the second floor of the church-owned two-flat, including tub repair, a new ceiling fan, and lighting in the kitchen.

In August, power washing of walls was done on the outside of the church building.

On September 16, the Trustees held an All-church Work Day, during which re-staining benches, trimming bushes/trees, and cleaning pews in the sanctuary were accomplished. Many thanks to all the volunteers who made this such a success!

In October, the transition from our old accounting software (ACS) to Realm was completed. This was a huge (and long overdue) process that will make it easier to use and provide more benefits to our members.

On October 7, an All-church Rummage Sale was held (right), and we raised \$5,000 for the Building with Faithfulness campaign.

On November 7, the church courtyard downspouts were replaced (below), and tuckpointing was done. Also in



November, the Trustees installed a new railing on the front steps of the two-flat (below, right), carpet cleaning in the church took place, as did boiler maintenance and repairs. A new faucet and sink also were installed in the church kitchen by the Trustees.

## East Wall Project Update

BTL has recently issued their construction documents for the east wall repair project. The Trustees have reviewed the documents, and BTL sent them to various contractors for bidding purposes. We should have bids by the end of February. We expect the work



to be completed in June through September 2024.

Thermal imaging was done on the gym roof to identify the extent of water damage to the flat roof. We had three firms provide cost estimates to replace the roof sometime in the near future.

Trustees repaired the downspout by the north room on November 29 and did concrete work and caulking to stop water intrusion into the choir room.

# Notes

## **North Park Covenant Church Staff**

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Jeff Hunter, Co-pastor  
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Libby Piotrowski, Co-pastor  
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ext. 515

*To reach both Jeff and Libby, please use  
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Brian Ward, Music Ministry Coordinator/Interim Chancel  
Choir Director  
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Sunwoo Lee, Interim Organist

Linnea Olfelt, Interim Chancel Handbell Choir Director

Joline Paska, Bookkeeper  
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Christian Schuetz, Custodian  
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Ann-Marie O. Frisk, Church Administrator  
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## **North Park Church Cooperative Preschool**

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Becky Edwards,  
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Lyndsey Wellner,  
Head Teacher/Educational  
Director

Jennifer Glazier,  
Assistant Teacher

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## **The Friendship Center**

2711 West Lawrence Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60625

Justin Block,  
Executive Director

(773) 907-6338  
info@friendshipcenterchicago.org  
www.friendshipcenterchicago.org

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## **Missionaries We Support**

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Letha Kerl,  
Regional Co-coordinator for Europe

Peter and Anna Kim, Taiwan

James and Rachel Ventress, Alaska

Paul and Sheryl Noren, Congo

Eugenio and Pia Restrepo,  
Latin America

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## **Welcome Statement**

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*We welcome all people to begin or deepen their relationship with Christ through worship and study. We invite all believers to fully participate in the life and ministry of our church as members, leaders, and lay staff. We celebrate the gifts and presence of diverse Christians among us—whether those differences be race, ethnicity, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, or socioeconomic status. We are blessed by our diversity and are unified in Christ.*

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