



# SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS

LUTHERAN CHURCH, SCHOOL, AND CHILD CARE

**Congregational Report**  
January 28, 2024

**Our mission: To lead people into a life-changing relationship with Jesus**

**[ShepherdLutheran.com](http://ShepherdLutheran.com)**

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## Shepherding the Flock

Rev. Dr. Christopher Kennedy, Senior Pastor, [pastorchrist@shepherdlutheran.com](mailto:pastorchrist@shepherdlutheran.com)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In the pages of this congregational report, you'll read reflections on Spirit-filled ministry from 2023 and plans for more God-honoring ministry in 2024. Behind all of the information, our staff and volunteer leaders exude enthusiasm for their leadership roles – enthusiasm that shines through in their articles.

Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men." Many times this verse is helpful for people who don't enjoy their job. You may know the feeling. You report for work and grind through the day. Amid the drudgery, you remind yourself, "I'm doing this for the Lord, so I'll do my best regardless of how I feel about the job."

The verse is helpful in that respect, but it's more than just encouragement to push through work that you don't enjoy. The verse also applies you work you enjoy and find meaningful. And let me tell you, there is no more meaningful work than Christian ministry! Whether it's outreach or youth ministry or music or preparing Communion or anything else in the church, we are working for the Lord. By God's power, we are advancing His Kingdom purposes. Our work for the Lord is joyful because He fills our hearts with joy!

Whatever you do, work heartily. We don't use the word "heartily" very often. Think of "wholeheartedly" – your heart is in it. I thank the Lord for all of His faithful servants at Shepherd, gifted saints whose hearts are in it. When I read the articles in this congregational report, I sense the heart behind the writing. And the articles themselves showcase to the spirit of giving and service that pervade our congregation. Thank you for being part of a team that is serving the Lord with great zeal!

God's blessings,  
Pastor Chris

### **Three things I want you to know about my ministry area . . .**

1. This past Christmas season we were busy!
  - Our kindergarten-2nd grade presented the Christmas story through the play "Christmas We're on the Air".
  - 4th-8th grade music and band students performed in a Christmas concert led by Mr. Doug Urban. The students used their instruments to play Christmas carols and get us all in the holiday spirit.
  - The last day before Christmas break, we held our annual Jingle Jog in the FLC gym. The students ran around the gym and danced to fun Christmas songs.
2. After January 1, we have had 4 new families starting with us; this is an additional 7 students added to our school and child care.
3. Our school-led extracurriculars are ready for the New Year. We have 6th-8th grade students preparing for a drama performance, 1st-8th grade athletes playing basketball, and a group of spirited girls, known as our cheer squad, cheering at our First Friday Pep Rallies and home basketball games.

### **Ministry metrics . . .**

Our teaching staff is leading devotions every Wednesday. We are focusing on the word "connected" as we walk through the second half of the school year.

We are starting our re-enrollment for the 2024-2025 school year. Our Back to School night was Thursday, January 25. The theme was game night. Families walked around campus finding "game pieces" by visiting classrooms and playing games inside the classroom. We had scholarships and prize drawings. It was a great night for SHLS!

### **I'm thankful for . . .**

The community we build at Shepherd. We are receiving many inquiries for the upcoming school year. Majority of our new families register because they have heard great things about Shepherd of the Hills.

Our classroom shepherds. The students love getting visits from our classroom shepherds. It is a joy to see them around campus, in the classrooms, and joining us for Wednesday chapel.

### **A great comment I heard recently at church was . . .**

God Wins at SHLS!

**Dale Stein Jr., Congregation President, dalesteinjr1@gmail.com**

- The three boards have reviewed and agreed on a modification of our Constitution and a copy of the draft Constitution is being included in the congregational meeting packet. We will be holding a congregational informational gathering to answer any questions and receive comments. We are still working on the By-Laws and will provide the proposed document later this year.
- The BOD has received and accepted the report from the King George and Dove Ministry Team. The team has suggested to sell the homes, but until the “stuff” in the homes has been removed, we cannot move forward. The plan is to have two garage sales, one for church members only and then one for the general public. These will be held later this spring. Once this has been done, the board will review the needs for the homes again and bring it to the congregation.
- We have been using our new FLC for several months now and I think we all are very excited about it. However, many of you are aware, the construction is not complete. There are still several problems the Construction Committee is working with the contractor to fix/complete. It appears the contractor is not in need of the retainage we are holding until the work is “totally” completed.
- I am looking forward to the new year. Now that the FLC is operational, the BOD will begin looking at the future needs of our growing congregation. I’m sure this will be an exciting year.

Dale R Stein, Jr.  
President  
SHLC Board of Directors



**Three things I want you to know about my ministry area . . .**

1. Prayer partners are here for you! Deaconess Deb Woods ([woodsworks1@live.com](mailto:woodsworks1@live.com)) directs our prayer partner ministry. Elders and Deaconesses remain after each service to listen to your concerns, needs, and joys and pray to our Lord with you. Just come to the front after the service and we will pray to Jesus!
2. Do you want to be a pro-Life activist? Elder Tom Farrand – bass player for our 10:30 Sunday service – ([tjcafarrand62@gmail.com](mailto:tjcafarrand62@gmail.com)) directs our Sanctity of Life ministry. Sanctity of Life Weekend at Shepherd is January 27/28, 2024. Please reach out to Tom if you would like to be involved in this outreach ministry.
3. “Meet Your Elder or Deaconess” meals are scheduled for February:

10:15 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 11 – Edwin Pedraza, Linda Bledsoe, Mike Miller, Susan Rath

4:45 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 17 – Mikki Senkarik, Mike Dau, Deb Woods, Cheryl Summerville

11:45 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 18 – Jason Schillerstrom, Bryan Smith, Craig Cannon, Ricky Torralva, Tom Farrand

10:15 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 25 – Wes Vasquez, Ed Garza, Rhonda Music, Gideon Baldwin, Brian Lawrence

**I’m thankful for . . .** the service of Deaconess Lindsay Leifeste and Elder John Trevino who are stepping off our board. I’m thankful that Cheryl Summerville will be joining our board in February.

**Two great comments I heard recently at church were . . . .**

“Lauren and Nanette do such a great job organizing our Baptisms!”

“Let’s keep that camel coming back [for Christmas Eve]!”



### Three things I want you to know about my ministry area . . .

1. As of the beginning of January, I am shifting my focus from outreach to discipleship (Bible studies, small groups, etc.). Melody is taking over outreach in addition to her Director of Hospitality duties.
2. For Lent, we'll be kicking off another small group study to go along with a sermon series on spiritual gifts.
3. I'm looking forward to connecting with all of our Bible study/small group leaders to encourage and support them moving forward.

### Ministry metrics . . .

Christmas 2022 attendance = 864 || Christmas 2023 attendance = 1,074

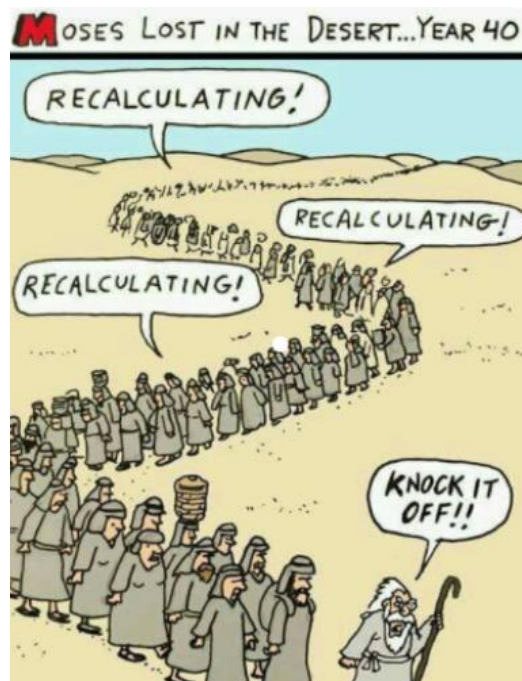
**I'm thankful for . . .** all the thanks and appreciation shared with me during the holiday season. I'm also thankful for all the teamwork that went into making it a wonderful Christmas here at Shepherd.

### A great comment I heard recently at church was . . .

"The music for the Christmas Eve services was off the chain!"



*As of the beginning of January, I am shifting my focus from outreach to discipleship (Bible studies, small groups, etc.).*



- At the end of 2023 we averaged \$21,190 in weekly tithes and offerings. Your faithful giving allowed us to finish 2023 with a net gain.
- The School and Kitchen are sustaining upward financial movement. The average balances sheet figures for the school remain above \$1 million.
- I'm thankful for the entire 2023 year. 2023 brought a lot of financial questions and the congregations answered strongly. We started a capital campaign and had an incredible pledge amount that surpassed the last campaign; we closed the loan on the FLC; we maintained strong weekly giving. It's amazing to look at Shepherd and see all the great things God has done for the ministry through His faithful congregation.
- I'm actively working on getting a revised campus master plan. As we continue to grow and move forward, we need to ensure that our campus will sustain and allow for continued growth. We are looking to revise the campus master plan to ensure that we stay well ahead of the curve.
- Thank you for your faithfulness and desire to bring people into a life-changing relationship with Jesus.

**Three things** I want you to know about my ministry area:



1. At the January Elders and Deaconesses Board meeting, I reported on my experiences with a short-term mission trip to Guatemala in August of 2018, and Pastor Chris has asked me to lead another one with Shepherd in September! Craig Cannon will be helping arrange logistics from San Antonio, and his experience with mission trips to Haiti will be invaluable. I am eager to return to visit the children's home in San Cristobal, run by Child Beyond International. Go to [www.childbeyond.org](http://www.childbeyond.org) for more information, and stay tuned; the Holy Spirit may be prompting YOU to go, too.

2. Two electric guitarists have auditioned for our Sunday praise team since Christmas. Both of them applied through Indeed.com, which has been a great resource for new hires. Once we have chosen the best candidate, he will start in February once all the new hire paperwork and background checks are completed. God continues to provide for music ministry!



3. SHLS students in preschool through grade 5 are scheduled to sing in worship in different age groupings twice more between now and April, both on Sunday mornings and for Lenten midweek services.

**I'm thankful for ...** Singers who volunteered their time to join choir for Christmas Eve worship. Our choir almost doubled in size, and the additional voices really enhanced our sound and our visual impact for the processional hymn.

**I'm also thankful for...** all the praise team members from both Saturday and Sunday teams who celebrated Christmas at my home in December. The chance to experience fellowship without the stress of preparing to lead worship was a real blessing to Jeanmarie and me.



**You can help by ...** volunteering to join a team that supports worship at Shepherd of the Hills. Choir, Handbells, Praise Teams, Usher Teams, Readers, Altar Teams, Camera Teams, and Shepherds Kids Teachers cannot do what they do without your time and talents.

**A great comment** I heard recently at church: "If that music was on a CD recording, I would buy it."



**Three things I want you to know about my ministry area . . .**

1. Youth will be attending Camp Eagle again this summer and will begin fundraising soon! Our goal is to take 25 students!
2. VBS planning with key leaders is beginning this month. We are ready to dive into friendship with God!
3. The Gingerbread Bash was a success! We will do more events like this in the future!

**Ministry metrics . . .**

We average 46 kids per weekend at Shepherd's Kids  
We had 100 participants at the Gingerbread Bash.

**I'm thankful for . . .**

Amazing volunteers who step up and serve here at Shepherd.

**A great comment I heard recently at church was . . .**

It was great to see so many people here for Christmas Eve services, I got to see some people that I hadn't seen for a while!



**GINGERBREAD BASH  
WAS AMAZING!!**



**Three things I want you to know about my ministry area . . .**

1. This year, I will be focusing more on outreach and evangelism, and I could not be more excited!
2. The welcome team is growing by the week and guests regularly describe us as a “friendly church.” How cool is that?!
3. I am excited to help facilitate more fellowship opportunities this year, one being the Meet Your Elders and Deaconesses meals in February!

**Ministry metrics . . .**

8 new members  
30 new volunteers

**I’m thankful for . . .**

My team of staff and volunteers! With everyone pulling together great things are happening!

**A great comment I heard recently at church was . . .**

Multiple guests have said that they “loved our service” after their first visits! Several things contribute to this, stellar worship music, inspiring sermons, and friendly people!



**Ministry Showcase 2024**

### Three things I want you to know about my ministry area . . .

1. Hitting the ground running in 2024 with tours of the Family Life Center with potential renters.
2. Working closely with Melody Smith to develop a designated page on our web site for the Family Life Center. The page will feature all areas of the FLC with photos and information for those looking for the perfect venue, whether it be sports, wedding reception, and more! There are endless possibilities.
3. Working on PR for upcoming events: February Elder and Deaconess Meals and the Daddy-Daughter Dance.

### Ministry metrics . . .

We are off to a great start for Baptisms in 2024! One child baptized January 13. Pastor Andy is going to spike that number with the February 7 school baptism service!

### I'm thankful for . . .

The connections made through Shepherd's venue rentals. A daughter brought her mom to church a couple of weeks ago. They were first-time visitors. How did they hear about Shepherd? The daughter is a member of the Magnolia Hospice Co., a group that rents our facility twice a year. Renea felt the warmth of our church and wanted to explore more of who we are. I am thankful that the Holy Spirit is working as we open our campus to the community.

### A great comment I heard recently at church was . . .

*"I love the Sunday morning Bible class!"*



*The behind the scenes crew are very much appreciated!!*