

The background of the entire page is a close-up photograph of a lit candle in a dark holder. The candle is lit, and the flame is visible. The background is filled with many out-of-focus, glowing circular lights in warm tones of orange, yellow, and white, creating a bokeh effect. A dark, semi-transparent banner is overlaid at the bottom of the image, containing the text "2025 ANNUAL REPORT" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

**2025**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**



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# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

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For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

*-1 Corinthians 3:9-11*

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As we gather for this year's annual meeting, I am filled with both immense gratitude for your generosity over the past year and excitement for the future of Olivet.

Your generosity has been evident in the completion of numerous capital campaign projects and in reducing our mortgage balance from more than \$1.2 million to just \$385,000. To see work we have dreamed about and planned for over many years come to fruition has been truly incredible. Thank you for attending congregational meetings, approving projects, hearing updates, and asking thoughtful questions along the way. I am excited to see the impact that paying down this debt will have on our ability to better serve our community as a place of worship, care, and connection.

While this progress is exciting, our work is not done. Together, we have the opportunity to bring our vision to life—building on the strong foundation of our faith and the commitment of you, our members. Whether through enhancing worship experiences, fostering new ways to connect, or expanding how we serve, the possibilities ahead are inspiring.

**As I conclude my six years on the council and two as council president, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you for your unwavering support, dedication, and prayers. It is your involvement that makes Olivet Lutheran Church a thriving, vibrant community of faith. As we step into this next year, may we move forward with hope, purpose, and unity, trusting in God's guidance every step of the way.**

In Christ's love,  
Jill Christopher  
Council President

# FEBRUARY 9, 2025

## ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

**Call to order:** The meeting was called to order by Council President Jill Christopher at 9:44 a.m. Members of the congregation attended the meeting in person in the Fellowship Hall.

### **Opening Prayer by Pastor Hope Deutscher**

**Secretary's Report:** The 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes were included and distributed in the Annual Report. Motion was made to approve by Curt Stofferahn. Mikkel Pates seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

### **Election to Church Council Members:**

- Thank you to the nominating committee for their work presenting the slate of candidates.
- Thank you to outgoing council members, Tracy Lyson and Jerry Rostad.
- The slate of candidates presented includes: Erin Gillett (second term), Richard Reger (second term), Shawn Hanson (first term), and Erin Huber (first term).
- Tim Rensch made a motion to approve the slate of candidates for the church council. Curt Stofferahn seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

### **Election of Foundation Board Members:**

- Thank you to outgoing foundation members, Leanne Gronneberg and Darin Ohe.
- The slate of candidates presented includes: Melissa Glander (first term) and Jeff Rustvang (first term).
- Kimberly Gunderson made a motion to approve the slate of candidates for the foundation board. Mikkel Pates seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

**Treasurer's Report:** Shane Brewer reported on the financial status of 2024 and the expense allocation for the 2025 mission plan.

- Erin Gillett made a motion to approve the 2025 mission plan as presented. Jerry Rostad seconded. No discussion. Motion carried.

**Gifted for Mission Capital Campaign Update:** Kim Rensch gave a financial update on the campaign and approved projects.

### **Pastor's Reports:**

- **Pastor Bill Boelter:** I simply want you to know how grateful I am to be serving the Olivet congregation. Indeed, it is an honor.
- **Pastor Hope Deutscher:** As we give thanks for all the ministry of 2024, let us look to 2025 excited for all that God is calling us to do together!
- **Pastor Kris Gordon:** 2025 promises to bring more of the same, and perhaps some extra blessings. We will continue to share love of God and neighbor, grow together spiritually, seek ways to live and serve, and faithfully explore what it means to follow the Crucified and Risen Jesus.

### **Closing prayer provided by Pastor Kris Gordon**

**Motion to adjourn:** A motion was made by Richard Reger to adjourn. Shane Brewer seconded. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 10:14 a.m.

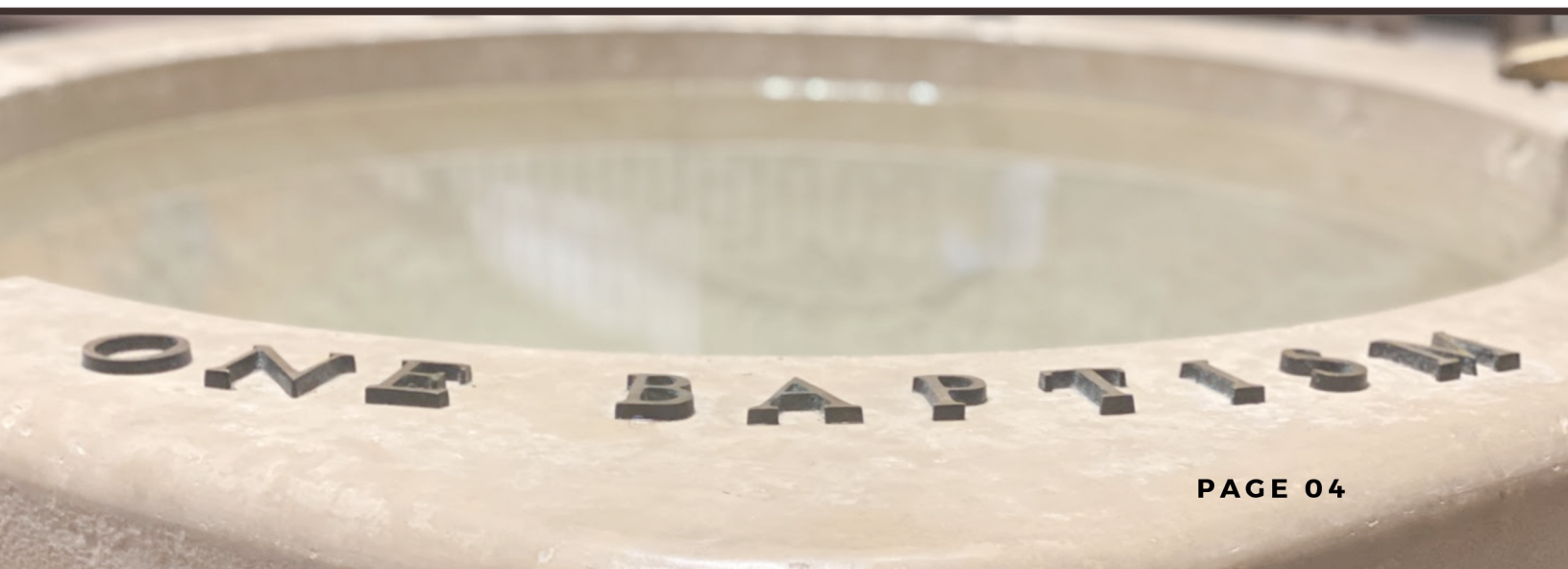
Respectfully submitted,  
Erin Gillett, Church Council Secretary

# 2025 STATISTICAL SUMMARY

SERVICES DURING	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
Regular Sunday	84	82	81	84	75
Communion Sunday	84	82	80	84	75
Marriages	3	5	7	6	4
Funerals	16	28	27	36	35
Wednesday & Holidays	49	56	52	65	64

MEMBERS RECEIVED	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
Children baptized	19	27	28	18	21
Adults baptized	0	0	2	0	0
By transfer from ELCA congregations	21	11	26	20	22
From other sources & statistical adjustments	2	6	0	8	1
Total members received	42	44	56	46	44
Young people confirmed	25	25	22	16	27

MEMBERS REMOVED	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
By death	15	24	26	34	32
By transfer to ELCA congregations	15	2	6	10	22
From other sources & statistical adjustments	0	0	0	10	4
Total members removed	30	26	32	54	58



# WITH GRATITUDE

Over the past year, a dedicated group of leaders and volunteers has played a pivotal role in advancing Olivet's mission and ministry. Their unwavering commitment, tireless work, and generous spirit have been invaluable to our community.

From organizing events and leading initiatives, to offering their time and talents in countless ways, each individual has contributed to the success and growth of our ministry. We are especially grateful for their leadership, which has not only strengthened our community but has also made a lasting impact on those we serve.

As we reflect on the year, we celebrate the countless hours of service, the creativity and passion brought to each project, and the dedication to our shared mission. Your collective efforts embody the true spirit of service and have helped Olivet thrive.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to each elected leader and all our volunteers.

## 2025 CHURCH COUNCIL

Jill Christopher (President)	Mike Raum	Richard Reger
Erin Gillett (Vice-President)	Carol Grettum	Erin Huber
Shane Brewer (Treasurer)	Rob Jenson	Chopper Krogstad
Julie Almquist (Secretary)	Shawn Hanson	

\*Also served on council in 2025: Roger Larson and Curt Stofferahn

## 2025 FOUNDATION BOARD

Jessica Ebeling (President)	Jeff Rustvang
Mikkel Pates (Secretary)	Nathan Hoffmann
Melissa Glander (Treasurer)	Steve Strinden

## GIFTED FOR MISSION CAPITAL CAMPAIGN CHAIRS

Tim & Kim Rensch	Jon & Joan Rustvang
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## NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Jill Christopher	Steve Strinden
Mike Raum	Leanne Gronneberg
Mikkel Pates	Scott Nester

## MUTUAL MINISTRY COMMITTEE

Mike Almquist	Don Meronuk
John Campbell	Kayla Moore
Chopper Krogstad	Jean Zimmerman

## CALL COMMITTEE

Tom Eide (Chair)	Missy Heilman	Jack Zaleski
Jenna Meyers (Secretary)	Caitlin Hoff	Carol Grettum (Council Liaison)
Mike Almquist	Katie Munion	Lily Christopher (Youth Liaison)
Mark Anderson	Ryan Nagel	



# OLIVET LUTHERAN CHURCH STRATEGIC PLAN

## MISSION & VISION

**OLIVET'S MISSION IS TO TELL THE STORY OF JESUS' LOVE FOR ALL PEOPLE WITHOUT EXCEPTION.**

As people from a variety of backgrounds and stages of life, we seek to be a place of worship, service, and community where all people will encounter Jesus and experience grace.

Olivet is a member congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and its Eastern North Dakota Synod.

## >> STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

### **FOSTER A SOLID FOUNDATION OF FAITH**

#### GOAL 1.1

Provide engaging worship experiences where all are welcome.

#### GOAL 1.2

Provide faith formation education & opportunities for the children and youth of the congregation.

#### GOAL 1.3

Provide relevant educational opportunities to adult members of the congregation.

## >> STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

### **STEWARD OUR GOD-GIVEN GIFTS**

#### GOAL 2.1

Wisely utilize and grow our financial resources.

#### GOAL 2.2

Provide information and education to the congregation about how Olivet is using its God-given gifts.

#### GOAL 2.3

Implement proven risk management strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability of Olivet.

## >> STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

### **DEEPEN CONNECTIONS WITH OUR FAITH & EACH OTHER**

#### GOAL 3.1

Facilitate opportunities for members of Olivet to become more involved within our church community.

#### GOAL 3.2

Revitalize the guest and new member experience.

#### GOAL 3.3

Maximize the impact of Olivet's efforts to support our community through our outreach ministries.

# LIFELONG LEARNING COMMISSION REPORT

The Lifelong Learning commission is responsible for program planning and for the management of ministries related to learnings, service, and youth.

**2025 Commission Members: Julie Almquist, Carol Grettum, Erin Huber, Pastor Bill Boelter, Pastor Hope Deutscher, Michelle Elness**

Lifelong Learning continues to offer many opportunities throughout the year for children, youth, families and adults to learn and grow in their faith. The following highlights many of those opportunities.

- Bibles are given to children at baptism, as 3-year-olds starting Sunday/Wednesday School, in 3rd grade, in 6th grade and as a confirmation gift to 10th graders.
- Learning and Sharing is often held between services with a variety of topics and presentations.
- Adult Bible studies for men and women are held on a regular basis. This includes: Women of Faith, the Gather Circle, Scripture Bible Study and Men's morning coffee.
- The library continues to support learning with many books for spiritual growth as well as current fiction and non-fiction books.

## 2025 Youth programs at a glance

133

PRE K-5TH GRADE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN SUNDAY & WEDNESDAY SCHOOL

103

STUDENTS ENROLLED IN CONFIRMATION

25

10TH GRADE STUDENTS CONFIRMED IN OCTOBER

75

STUDENTS ENROLLED IN VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL IN JUNE

68

STUDENTS & CHAPERONES ATTENDED TRIPS OVER THE 2025 YEAR

70

VOLUNTEER TEACHERS & LEADERS ARE NEEDED FOR SUNDAY/WEDNESDAY SCHOOL AND CONFIRMATION EACH WEEK

# PARISH LIFE & SOCIAL OUTREACH COMMISSION REPORT

The Parish Life and Social Outreach Commission is responsible for program planning and for management of ministries related to the congregation's smaller groups engaged in service, care of members, outreach, and mission beyond the congregation.

**2025 Commission Members: Erin Gillett, Chopper Krogstad, Skip & Sherry Espeseth, Mary Ann Ouradnik, Harriet Smedshammer, Krysta Eicholtz and Pastor Hope Deutscher**

During 2025, Olivet members and programs continued to provide a variety of opportunities to serve our neighbors, as well as build community within Olivet and the Fargo-Moorhead community. Here are a few highlights:

## SOCIAL OUTREACH

### Feeding Ministries:

- The needs of the Olivet Food Pantry continue to greatly increase. In 2025, 10,073 pounds of food was donated by the congregation to the Olivet Food Pantry. Combined with additional food through our partnership with the Great Plains Food Bank, we were able to feed 2,580 families through our twice-a-month mobile food pantries.

Olivet Food Pantry By the Numbers	Food Donated by Olivet Members	Food Distributed (with Great Plains Food Bank)	Households Served
2023	6,200 Pounds	23,443 Pounds	1,652
2024	5,500 Pounds	46,572 Pounds	1,800
2025	10,073 Pounds	78,745 Pounds	2,800

- Olivet members donated approximately 2,000 hours of volunteer time to the pantry.
- In addition to the Mobile Food Pantry, we also shared food with walk-in clients at Olivet and with Fargo Public School students who have been identified by social workers. And through our metro-wide food pantry network, we have also begun participating in a share program with other pantries and organizations to reduce food waste. We shared 10,260 pounds of food with Downtown Engagement Center, NDSU Crossroads Ministry, The Arbors, New Life Center, and Churches United.
- The 2025 Christmas Eve Dinner served 500 in-person meals, fed 100 volunteers, provided 300 takeout meals, and delivered 100 meals to Churches United. Leftover food was given to the YWCA and New Life Center. Thanks to our generous congregation for donating the needed food and monetary donations. Your kindness has made a lasting impact, bringing warmth, joy, and hope to so many at Christmas.
- Our Wednesday evening meals are prepared and served by Olivet members. As well, members serve at several local shelters and community organizations, including Churches United, New Life Center, and NDSU Crossroads Lutheran Campus Ministry.

# PARISH LIFE & SOCIAL OUTREACH COMMISSION REPORT

## SOCIAL OUTREACH (CONTINUED)

### Other projects:

- Olivet members shared the Christmas spirit through the Christmas Giving Tree, providing gifts to over 200 individuals, including 150 youth, who were referred to us through the Fargo Public Schools, New Life Center, Matthew's Voice Project, and families within Olivet.
- We collected gently used toys for Open Door 65, a free thrift store in Moorhead, and created health kits to be shared in our community.
- Olivet hosted a booth at Pride in the Park last summer. We have been grateful for the life and ministry of Ukrainians who have joined us in volunteering with our food pantry and in other ways.
- The Chili and Chocolate fundraiser was held to support our local and global ministry partners: Lutheran Partners in Global Ministry, Churches United for the Homeless, Lake Habitat for Humanity, and our sister synod congregation in the Central African Republic.

### Olivet Quilters:

These devoted ladies meet on Wednesday mornings from September through mid-May, creating nearly 250 quilts each year that are shared both locally and around the world. In 2025, 144 quilts were shared with local organizations, including Churches United and families resettled from Ukraine, while 42 quilts were sent to Lutheran World Relief. The congregation's support is very appreciated.

## PARISH LIFE

Olivet remains dedicated to supporting members' health needs (see Parish Nurse report) and Women's Ministry (see Pastor Hope's report). Our parish life ministries foster ongoing connection and spiritual growth. The Commission regularly reviews and responds to congregational needs.

Throughout the year, Olivet members reach out into our community serving in a variety of ways, and we are grateful for their giving and generous hearts serving our neighbors, through Olivet-focused ministries and on their own as they see needs and respond!

Submitted by Pastor Hope Deutscher



# RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION REPORT

The Resource Development Commission is responsible for program planning and for the management of ministries related to the resources of time, talent, property, and money and for the publicizing and communicating the work of the congregation.

**2025 Commission Members: Shane Brewer, Rob Jenson, Richard Reger, Senior Pastor Kris Gorden, Sarah Lundblad**

The Resource Development commission continues to focus on **stewarding our God-given gifts by wisely utilizing and growing our financial resources**. Throughout the strategic planning process, your church council identified the five action steps below to support this priority.

- Eliminate mortgage through the Gifted for Mission capital campaign.
- Increase annual pledges to \$1 million, then index for inflation in following years.
- Establish a capital reserve fund for future capital repair needs and build a growth plan for the fund.
- Grow the Olivet Foundation through clear disbursement policies and education to members.
- Efficiently manage the use of our space and facility.

Several of the action steps have been key topics of discussion among elected leaders and congregation members for a considerable period of time, reinforcing the importance of incorporating these items into Olivet's broader strategic plan.

## 2025 SUMMARY

If we had to sum up 2025 in just a few words, we would call it a year of answering the call. When needs were clearly shared, you responded—with generosity, participation, and trust. Again and again, you showed up, and for that we are deeply grateful.

Highlights from the year include:

- Pledged income finished the year at 102% of budget
- The Thirteenth Month Appeal raised more than \$45,000, reaching 97% of its goal
- Lent, Easter, and Christmas offerings all exceeded expectations
- Significant progress was made in reducing our mortgage debt

As we closed out 2025, one important insight became clear: while generosity across the congregation remains strong, there is an opportunity to continue strengthening how we share the story of how your gifts support the day-to-day ministry and operations of the church.

Our unpledged giving goal for 2025 was intentionally ambitious. While it was not fully met, we are thankful for the continued support from those who give regularly and occasionally. We also recognize that 2025 was a year of uncertainty for many, and we are especially grateful for the ways you continued to support Olivet through it all.

Many people are giving what they can, and as we continue to engage and educate all generations of givers, we remain confident that giving will grow to be more consistent, more intentional, and more sustainable in the years ahead.

# WORSHIP & WITNESS COMMISSION REPORT

The Worship and Witness Commission is responsible for program planning and for the management of ministries related to large gatherings for worship and praise, nurturing of members, and for witness and outreach to the unchurched of the community.

**2025 Commission Members: Jill Christopher, Michael Raum, Shawn Hanson, Senior Pastor Kris Gorden, Music Director Marlys Herring, Worship Media Specialist Eric Heyer**

The Worship and Witness Commission met numerous times over the past year. Our work focused on the strategic priorities that were identified through the recent strategic plan process.

One highlight was completing an updated church directory that you will have shortly. Thank you to everyone who participated in this valuable resource for our congregation as we work to build connection and community.

Other areas of focus included:

- An updated visitor follow-up plan to help welcome visitors and invite them to continue to attend Olivet.
- Discussed summer Wednesday worship options to best connect during our short summer and boost attendance.
- Continued work on increasing worship volunteer participation within Olivet.

**We are thankful for the dedication of our volunteers and staff who support worship each week, and for a congregation that continues to grow in hospitality and engagement.**

The Worship and Witness Commission looks forward to building on this year's work as we seek to strengthen worship, welcome new faces, and support Olivet's mission in the year ahead.

# OLIVET LUTHERAN CHURCH FOUNDATION REPORT

**2025 Olivet Foundation Board: Jessica Ebeling (Chair), Melissa Glander (Treasurer), Mikkel Pates (Secretary), Nathan Hoffmann, Steve Strinden, Jeff Rustvang, Shane Brewer (Council Treasurer), Jill Christopher (Council President), Senior Pastor Kris Gorden (Advisor)**

The Olivet Foundation is a ministry of Olivet Lutheran Church with the purpose of advancing the Gospel-based mission of our congregation for current and future generations.

## Investment Management and Distribution Policy

The Foundation Board utilizes formalized investment and distribution policies following recognized uniform practices for endowment management.

In collaboration with our investment manager, Heartland Trust, we will target a real annualized investment return averaged over a five to seven-year period. This target percentage will be reviewed annually in consultation with the investment managers and may be adjusted based upon market performance and conditions.

Olivet continues to hold Certificates of Deposit in the ELCA Mission Investment Fund (MIF). As these remaining CD's mature, the intent is to transfer the funds to the Heartland Trust investment account. Because of the role of MIF in assisting with the congregation's mortgage negotiation, Olivet will continue to maintain an account relationship with MIF as advised by the Olivet Church Council.

The Foundation Board will annually set the amounts available for distribution for the current fiscal year, based on a percentage of the three-year rolling average of quarterly investment valuations. Once the annual distribution amount is set, the Foundation Board allocates 50% of that amount to fund requests from members/staff, with the other 50% allocated to the annual budget of the Olivet congregation.

## Board Membership

Outgoing members Mikkel Pates and Steve Strinden have completed their terms, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude for their dedicated service. Their time, insight, and commitment have made a meaningful impact, and we deeply appreciate all they have contributed.

### Olivet Foundation Statement of Financial Position As of December 31, 2025

ASSETS	
Cash	\$ 4,151
Investments	<u>1,924,100</u>
Total Assets at Market Value	<u>\$ 1,928,251</u>
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	
Current Liabilities	\$ -
Restricted Net Assets	1,519,092
Unrestricted Net Assets	<u>409,159</u>
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	<u>\$ 1,928,251</u>
SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES	
<u>Revenue</u>	
Realized Gains	\$ 94,012
Unrealized Gains	139,877
Donations	<u>273,195</u>
Total Revenue	\$ 507,084
<u>Distributions &amp; Expenses</u>	
General Fund Distribution to Olivet Church	\$ 33,435
Pastoral Grant-Egypt	2,650
College ECLA Scholarships	3,000
Crossroads College Ministry	2,000
Olivet Church Directory	7,550
Holiday Musicians	3,000
Investment Advisory Fees / Bank Fees	<u>9,735</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 61,370
Change in Net Assets	<u>\$ 445,714</u>

# GIFTED FOR MISSION UPDATE

In May 2025, we celebrated the one-year anniversary of our three-year Gifted for Mission Capital Campaign, having raised enough money to fund the installation of a new sanctuary roof, a chiller, big LED screens in the sanctuary, and a second elevator. Along with these necessary upgrades, we were able to start chipping away at our mortgage.

Olivet rang in 2025 with a mortgage of \$1.275 million. After multiple large payments adding up to \$891,000, we are thrilled to share that we entered 2026 owing just under \$385,000, putting us on track to make a final payment just ahead of March 2027, when our mortgage is due for refinancing.

Our original Gifted for Mission goal of \$2.5 million included a few “want not need” projects, such as replacing flooring and chairs in the Fellowship Hall, updating sanctuary sound equipment, and installing a large electronic sign on the southwest corner of the church grounds. While paying down the mortgage takes priority over these projects, it is still our hope that we will raise the final million dollars needed to get us to the \$2.5 million goal.

We wish to thank the Olivet staff and Church Council members for the countless hours they have devoted to the Capital Campaign. **To all who have donated, lifted up our church in prayer, invited others to join the campaign, and have attended campaign update and voting meetings, we express our gratitude for your faithfulness!**

Gifted for Mission Capital Campaign Chairs,  
Jon and Joan Rustvang  
Tim and Kim Rensch

**GIFTED FOR MISSION** CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Now is the time to grow in our mission and strengthen our Olivet community.

**Together, we are gifted for mission.**

# PASTOR REPORT

By Senior Pastor Kris Gorden

“When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.” - 1 Corinthians 2:1-3

It is quite remarkable to live in God’s faithfulness. We can be surprised, amazed, slack-jawed, and yet the Spirit remains active, working God’s will for our good. Living in God’s faithfulness, we strive to follow the will and mission set before us. This is our faithfulness.

It is what I observe and experience among the Olivet congregation. **God remains faithful, and we strive to live out our calling.** This was shared in a variety of ways over the last year. Education for children and youth is thriving, and our young people are active in their faith, eager to learn and experience what God is all about. Worship continues its strong and central role in our lives, and worshippers genuinely want to be a part of it. Adult bible studies and fellowship opportunities are vibrant, and our service to others makes a deep impact in our community. The Call Committee continues its faithful and diligent work. Financial stewardship is strong and faithful in support of the Mission Plan. The Capital Campaign goes well, and we made a serious dent in the mortgage balance. These are all good and faithful signs.

There was a time not that long ago when the health of a congregation was measured through the metrics of worship attendance and financial stewardship. This still has its place. What it lacked were areas that numbers cannot measure. Faithfulness. Engagement. Commitment. Connectedness. Belonging. Purpose. For those of us who love to see the numbers add up, this can be a challenge.

Still, this is what we are experiencing in our midst. God in Christ is up to stirring hearts and souls to faithfulness and connection, with each other and with the Divine. We have kept our message straightforward, taking a cue from St. Paul to the Church in Corinth. He kept his message focused on the Crucified Christ. We do, too, so that we may all face our weakness, fear, and trembling, in the faith that this One and his people are with us. This Jesus was faithful, even unto death. May we continue this faithfulness as well.

In 2025, we opened the door to wondering about the Jesus Way, about what it truly means to follow this One. There is much going on in the world today that questions the followers of Jesus. Walking in the Way of what he actually did and actually said seems like a great place to start. So, we will continue our seeking throughout the year.

**Christ remains faithful. My heart is filled with gratitude for this congregation seeking the Way.**

Peace,  
Pastor Kris Gorden

# PASTOR REPORT

By Pastor Bill Boelter

“If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” - Romans 12:18

“Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.” - Romans 14:19

**Do what makes for peace. Live peaceably.** These are instructions given to a church in Rome nearly 2000 years ago. They could well be written to us today. We long for peace in our world and offer prayers regularly for that outcome in places where God’s people are being killed or maimed daily. Some in our own country find peace elusive because of their ethnic heritage, the color of their skin, or their fear of being deported. In the midst of all of this, **we are called as a church to be a people that moves toward a sense of peace.** Both Paul and Jesus would have used the word “shalom.”

Many are familiar with the Hebrew word shalom. Shalom means “peace” in English. But beyond that simple definition, it has a deeper meaning. The common Western definition of peace is the absence of conflict or war, but in Hebrew, it means so much more. The ancient Hebrew meaning of shalom was “to make something whole,” with an overall sense of fullness and completeness in mind, body, and estate. In Hebrew, the word translated as “well-being”, “well”, and “in good health” is all one word – Shalom.

In the past year, I have witnessed the people of Olivet strive to be a place that exemplifies the kind of peace that scripture is talking about. In the proclamation of the Gospel, in study groups, in fellowship gatherings, and in hands-on service to the community, you have shared the love of Christ that brings the peace so desired by all people. **This congregation is centered on the Gospel and, as a result, lives out the message by being welcoming, compassionate, caring, forgiving, and hopeful.** While such activity may not solve the world’s conflicts, it does make a difference in the lives of many people and is most certainly the beginning of a movement for world peace.

This is why I find it a humbling privilege to serve as a pastor here at Olivet. **I am allowed to be part of this incredible ministry that you faithfully carry out year after year.** I am uncertain how much longer I will be able to do this, but I confess that after 21 years, it would be very difficult to step away. My whole family loves Olivet, finds opportunities to be a part of this ministry, and has developed strong connections with people in this congregation. And chances are pretty good that Jeanette has captured your picture as you worship, study, and serve in this congregation. So, as we seek to call another pastor, I will be moving into a new phase of my ministry here. At this point, I am not sure exactly what that will look like, but I am certain that this change will be guided by the Holy Spirit and will be the best for Olivet. In the meantime, I will continue to help you live peaceably with one another and will support you in any way I can to discover new and innovative ways to pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding.

With Love,  
Pastor Bill Boelter

# PASTOR REPORT

By Pastor Hope Deutscher

“Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up, so take nothing for granted. Stay wide-awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless—cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it: if words, let it be God’s words; if help, let it be God’s hearty help. That way, God’s bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and he’ll get all the credit as the One mighty in everything—encores to the end of time. Oh, yes!” - 1 Peter 4:7-11

In this scripture passage, Peter addresses those who think they can use their gifts for their own purposes and those who think they don’t have any special talents at all. The good news: everyone has a gift to share; find yours and use it! Even as you seek to discover your gifts, if you see a need in the church, step in and help. In the process, you may find gifts in areas you might not have guessed!

**I am in awe of all the ways YOU share your gifts at Olivet and in the community.** As I lead adult bible studies, youth confirmation classes, and worship, as well as walk alongside volunteers serving on the Parish Life and Social Outreach Commission and the Lifelong Learning Commission, it’s exciting to see how many people commit their time and energy to our ministry programs and to serve their neighbors in the community.

Below are some highlights of the ministry that I’m involved with:

**Women’s Ministry:** We continue to offer a variety of regular Bible studies: Women of Faith Weekly Bible studies (Mondays at 1 p.m., Thursdays at 7 p.m.); The Gather Circle (Third Tuesdays at 9 a.m.); and MOMCO (open to mothers with youth of all ages, meets twice a month). Women also hosted a Spring Heirloom Brunch, where we heard from Mary Hetland, who shared about the artwork her husband, David Hetland, created and installed at Olivet and around the region; and in December, we hosted an Advent Luncheon, where representatives of Churches United shared an update on the needs of their organization.

**Youth and Family Ministry:** I also support Youth and Family Ministry in a variety of ways, including:

- Helping with 3-and 4-year-old Sunday School Orientation
- Helping with Vacation Bible School
- Writing and leading 2:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Family Service
- Leading Third Grade Confirmation – Introduction to the Bible Class
- Leading Fourth Grade Confirmation – Introduce daily devotional and Bible reading
- Fifth Grade Confirmation - Learn about the Sacrament of Holy Communion
- Eighth Grade Confirmation – Learning about God’s story in the Old Testament and how it relates to their story

**Other ministries:** In addition to general pastoral ministry (preaching, leading worship, funerals, weddings, baptisms, etc.), during 2025, I led a GriefShare Support Group on Tuesdays. GriefShare is a Christ-centered grief support group where people find support, direction, and help after a loved one’s death. People find support from one another, and they learn how to manage grief’s emotions and stressors. This began as a group that met monthly. However, in November, the group began meeting weekly for 13 weeks. Olivet will continue to host GriefShare support groups periodically.

May we continue to share our gifts – with love, being quick to make a meal, with generosity, sharing food, fellowship, and our talents – cheerfully! **May we continue to grow in our faith, and walk alongside one another as we encounter Jesus and experience His grace in all we do – within Olivet and the community.**

God’s blessings,  
Pastor Hope Deutscher

# AUDIO/VISUAL DEPARTMENT

By Eric Heyer  
Worship Media Specialist

I am happy to report that Olivet’s online viewership increased by 25% and our subscribers increased by nearly 10% in 2025! Between our online worship services and videos, we amassed 26,800 views for a total of 5,000 hours of viewing time.

The largest age group that uses our YouTube channel continues to be those age 65+ - who account for nearly half of our viewers. That tells us that this ministry tool continues to keep our shut-ins and snowbirds connected and engaged with Olivet. The second-highest demographic is the 18–34-year-old range, which also fits with national trends for YouTube viewership. Did you know that YouTube is the #1 online search engine, bigger than Google, among that demographic?

The LED screen installation was a big project, and I hope you are pleased with the results. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the Capital Campaign and made this upgrade possible. It is wonderful to be able to use the screens at any time of the day and not have to worry about washout from the sunlight streaming through our beautiful west windows! An interesting fact about our LED screens: the screen brightness is only set to 30% of what it can produce, which will significantly increase the life expectancy of the screens.

Tech volunteer numbers have fallen. We need 6-9 total volunteers each week for our Sunday and Wednesday services, but average only four. It is my hope that we can increase the number of volunteers for this important ministry tool.

In service,  
Eric Heyer



**↑25%**  
online viewership



subscribers increased  
**10%**



**26,800**  
views of our livestreams  
& videos



**5,000**  
hours of watch time



of our viewers are  
**50% 65 & older**



**6+**  
volunteers needed to  
assist with  
sound/video/livestream  
production each week

# COMMUNICATIONS

By Sue Wolf

Communications Specialist

Throughout 2025, Olivet’s communications focused on supporting the church’s mission by telling its story in clear, consistent, and meaningful ways. Through thoughtful messaging and creative design, communications supported worship, ministry programs, and outreach across digital, social media, and in-house materials, engaging both the congregation and the community.

The church website served as a central hub for information, offering easy access to worship details, ministry updates, and opportunities to get involved. Online volunteer registration and event RSVPs helped streamline communication and encourage participation. A refreshed website is planned for 2026 to further improve navigation, accessibility, and overall user experience.

Social media continued to provide a timely and visual connection. Facebook and Instagram remained key platforms, with consistent and intentional posting contributing to a 3.3% increase in Facebook followers and steady engagement on Instagram. These channels helped extend worship invitations, highlight congregational life, and keep members informed.

Email remained a dependable communication tool throughout the year. Regular updates, reminders, and newsletters, including the *Women’s Ministry Newsletter* and *The Emblem*, Olivet’s bi-weekly newsletter, helped maintain clear communication and ongoing engagement.

Beyond digital communications, Olivet expanded its visibility through external advertising. Seasonal billboards during Christmas and Easter extended invitations to worship and increased awareness of Olivet during significant moments in the church year.

Photography continued to be an essential part of communications, capturing authentic moments from worship, ministry, and daily church life. These images were used across print and digital platforms, helping visually tell Olivet’s story and reflect the people and relationships that shape the congregation.

In-house communication tools also played an important role, with announcement slides displayed on TVs throughout the building and before worship services, and *The Emblem* was shared both in worship bulletins and online.

In 2025, a long-anticipated church directory project also moved forward. A local professional photographer was hired, and photography sessions were completed in preparation for a new church directory scheduled for release in 2026.

Together, these efforts helped strengthen connections and share the life of Olivet throughout 2025. **As we look ahead to 2026, communications will continue to support the mission of the church by sharing the community, faith, and relationships that make Olivet home.**

With gratitude,  
Sue Wolf

## CONNECT WITH US!

 [olivet.org](http://olivet.org)  
  [@olivet\\_fargo](https://www.instagram.com/olivet_fargo)  
  [facebook.com/olivetlutheran](https://www.facebook.com/olivetlutheran)  
  [youtube.com/Olivetfargo](https://www.youtube.com/Olivetfargo)

# CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES REPORT

By Michelle Elness, Director of Children, Youth, & Family Ministries

## SUNDAY & WEDNESDAY SCHOOL

Sunday and Wednesday school is thriving with a total of 133 PreK-5th-grade students in attendance. Students are welcomed each week by wonderful, caring teachers; they have fun in music with leaders Jenica and Jocelyn and share their songs with the congregation throughout the year. In the classroom, they learn right along with the congregation following the lectionary by reading the stories, doing many activities that incorporate all learning styles, and, of course, fun crafts and snacks!

Vacation Bible school was a wonderful week with 75+ kids attending. Our theme of *Faith on the Farm* was a big hit! Thank you to the many volunteers who helped make it a fun, faith-filled week.



## CONFIRMATION

Confirmation consists of 103 6th-10th-grade students. Confirmation is organized this way:

### Each week consists of:

- A large group opening session, often with music.
- Then, students meet in grade-level groups for teaching and discussion led by a Pastor. Each Pastor works consistently with one grade level.
- Finally, the evening concludes with a brief small group time. Students, leaders, and Pastors have all found this to be an excellent structure. Consistency allows students and Pastors to develop stronger relationships with each other.

**Hang Time:** Jr. High students have the opportunity to “hang out” after confirmation in the Youth Room. They are encouraged to play, chat, listen to music, do crafts, use the games provided, and have fun.

**SNL:** Our senior high students have a program called Sunday Night Live (SNL). They get together to do activities together and build relationships. Many of these students are now confirmed and do not have weekly Wednesday programming, so SNL is a way for them to stay connected with each other and the church.

## COLLEGE STUDENTS

College students are included in our ministries in a few ways. Each fall and spring (around finals time), Olivet sends a care package and note of encouragement to our freshmen. We encourage them to stop by and say hello and worship with us while they are home on break. For those local college students, we let them know that each Wednesday night we serve a meal, they can join us and eat for free. Our generous Olivet Foundation gave us a grant to offset the meal costs. The foundation has also given yearly grants to fund our monthly feeding of NDSU students through the Lutheran campus ministries called Crossroads. Approximately once a month, we worship with and feed 40-50 students.

## YOUTH TRIPS

This past year, 68 students (plus chaperones) took part in trips/Bible Camps provided by Olivet. Including a Houseboat trip outside International Falls, a Minneapolis service trip, plus fun adventures. A weekend at Castaway Club, skiing at Andes Hills, and Emmaus and Luther Crest Bible camps.

# CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES REPORT CONTINUED

## OTHER NOTEWORTHY ITEMS

We continue to ensure the word of God is in the hands of our youth by providing Bibles to our children at Baptism, 3-year-olds, third graders, sixth graders at the start of Confirmation, and as a Confirmation gift for our tenth graders. 4th graders are given a devotional to work on together with parents and learn more about their Bibles and how to use them. This year, we added wonderful parenting books for parents of 3rd-5th grades.

- We celebrated our youth at First Communion and Confirmation, and we also honored our graduating seniors with a banquet, recognition in worship services, and gave them a quilt from our wonderful Olivet quilters group.
- Our Nursery is a well-loved spot for those 3 years and younger. Everyone loves to play at “Kasi’s house.”
- Our Children, Youth, and Family ministry programs are blessed with an impressive team of college students. These programs would not run without them. They are invaluable assets to the CYF ministries. Olivet has a tremendous staff that is so willing to help with our children & youth programming. It is a team effort. We are also blessed by the Olivet congregation through continuous prayer, support from wonderful volunteers, and financial generosity.

**Thank you for all the ways you give of your time, talents, and love to our Olivet youth.**



# MUSIC MINISTRIES REPORT

By Marlys Herring, Director of Music, on behalf of: Patti Hall (Youth Choir), Sarah Morrau (Celebrate! Band), and Jenica Boelter (Sunday School/Wednesday School Music)

There is little that could be shared in this report that you do not already know. Music at Olivet is woven into the life of our congregation; you see it, hear it, and experience it every time we gather. The images included here offer just a small glimpse into the breadth of our music ministry and represent only a fraction of what truly takes place throughout the year.

**On behalf of our music leaders, we are deeply grateful for the opportunity to work with our musicians and to help create worship experiences that are meaningful, faithful, and enriching for our community.**



Budding percussionists regularly support the Celebrate! Band and singers, contributing to the vibrant conclusion of the second service each Sunday.



The Youth Choir, under the direction of Patti Hall, sings in worship with accompaniment provided by the Celebrate! Band musicians.



Each Palm Sunday, our palm parade comes to life as Sunday School children lead the congregation in song and wave palm branches in celebration.



The Olivet Choir shares their voices on Music Sunday, supported by the rich accompaniment of a wind ensemble.



Jenica Boelter leads the Sunday School children in a concert for their parents and grandparents on Mothers' Day.



Vacation Bible School children are immersed in the theme—this year, a farm—through songs led by Jenica Boelter and live musicians.



This past Summer our contemporary band and singers led three outdoor worship services.



The Olivet Choir begins the Christmas Eve Lessons & Carols Service accompanied by a 28-piece orchestra.



The beloved Christmas Eve Lessons & Carols Service, featuring choir anthems, congregational carols, and a multi-generational orchestra.



Here is a section of the Christmas Eve orchestra. They mean business!!



Devin decorated his trumpet for Christmas Eve. Why? Because it plays so much better that way!



The men of the Olivet Choir sang a short carol as another organized group of Olivet musicians prepared to offer music during our Epiphany Event.



Jaden Link casually strolled across the front of the sanctuary playing a haunting rendition on his saxophone of "O Holy Night", a continuation of the special music offerings we were treated to during our Epiphany Event.



Bringing our Christmas Eve service to an emotional point was Lauren Poehls, who carried the light out into the world as the entire room sang Silent Night, accompanied by our orchestra.



The Olivet Handbell Choir plays regularly for worship. Above, the ringers rang for morning worship and for the Epiphany Event later in the afternoon, with the help of Pam Redlinger and Jenny Poehls on flutes.



Chloe Hall was one of many individuals who provided music for our Celebration of the Epiphany, our Epiphany Event.



Lily Christopher and Chloe Hall set the tone for our beautiful Epiphany Event by lighting candles and singing about it.



After Kenley Poehls sang about lighting a thousand candles, that is exactly what she did for our Epiphany Event: she started the light to flow throughout the congregation as we all sang "This Little Light of Mine."



The Celebrate! Band was yet another one of Olivet's resident music organizations, who not only play every Sunday, but also saved several musical offerings for the Epiphany Event.



Our fabulous Christmas Eve orchestra, made up of musicians of all ages, and all careers. We love the music they make for us as we sing our carols.



Our beloved interns started their own bell choir during Vacation Bible School of 2024, and they look forward to coming together from various colleges and jobs over the holidays to ring some more, whenever they are all here at the same time! Here they are ringing for the Candlelight Service on Christmas Eve. Eli, Jonah, Aubrie, Aiden, and Celia.



Our annual Music Sunday has all our musicians in one place at one time, a celebration of the drawing to a close of another year full of music by all our groups and many individuals. Seen above are the Celebrate! musicians, the Youth Choir, the Handbell Choir, the Olivet Choir, a wind ensemble, and our choir accompanist, Will Jacobson.



Throughout the year, a brass ensemble adds energy to special worship moments like Reformation, Christmas, Easter, and more—so it was only fitting to have brass carols at our Epiphany Event. And yes, there is a person behind that tuba!

# PARISH HEALTH REPORT

By Bev Gravdahl MS, BSN, RN

Parish Nurse | Gerontologist | Foot Care Specialist

Olivet's Health Ministry continues to thrive as it seeks meaningful ways to serve our congregation, community, and beyond. Parish nursing at Olivet has an intentional focus on pastoral nursing care and addressing spiritual, physical, mental, emotional, and social health needs as they arise.

Below are highlights of how the Health Ministry worked to enrich and support our congregation in 2025:

- **Visits:** Home visits continue to be a significant part of our health and healing ministry, particularly for those who are homebound. Hospital visits are made as opportunities arise.
- **Communion Companion Ministry:** Launched in October 2024, this ministry offers the sacrament of Communion and meaningful relationship-building to those who are homebound, sick, isolated, or lonely. The program has grown and currently includes nine trained volunteers who are actively connected with members of our faith community. Luncheons and opportunities to get involved are offered at least quarterly.
- **Healing Services:** Three healing services were offered in 2025 in collaboration with our pastors, including anointing of hands for caregivers. These services serve as a reminder that God welcomes all who seek help, hope, and healing.
- **Blood Drives:** Olivet served as a host site for blood drives in February and August of 2025.
- **Grief Ministry:** Monthly mailings and visitation schedules are maintained by our volunteer bereavement coordinator, offering ongoing support to those who have lost loved ones. Olivet's Moments to Remember program and the Remembrance Tree on All Saints Sunday are also part of this ministry. GriefShare, in partnership with Pastor Hope, continues to be an important offering, along with special outreach opportunities such as Mother's Day support.
- **Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance®:** This research-based, 12-week balance training program was offered during the summer of 2025 for adults at risk of falling or with balance concerns. The program was well-received, with plans to offer another session in 2026.
- **Wellness Wednesdays:** Beginning in October 2024 and continuing through May 2025, Wellness Wednesdays were held on the first Wednesday of each month. These gatherings focused on various aspects of well-being, including health education, personal reflection, guest speakers, and participation in healthy practices.
- **Monthly Newsletter:** Each month, Olivet's Health Ministry publishes a newsletter featuring health observances, upcoming wellness opportunities, and articles supporting body, mind, and spirit. Based on parishioner feedback, content has increasingly focused on the needs and interests of older adults, emphasizing healthy aging, chronic condition management, caregiving, and faith-centered encouragement.
- **Flu Shot Clinic:** In October 2025, Olivet partnered with Essentia Health to host a flu shot clinic, serving 42 individuals.
- **Health Education:** Health education and counseling are offered in a variety of ways, including Vacation Bible School, one-on-one consultations (including advanced directives), special events, newsletter articles, display boards, the resource tower, and blood pressure or glucose monitoring upon request.
- **Care Response:** AED units and first aid supplies are regularly updated and maintained throughout the building, along with related procedures and protocols.
- **CPR Training:** Olivet staff were offered CPR and First Aid training and certification in partnership with Essentia Health. This training is provided every other year through the Health Ministry.

# PARISH HEALTH REPORT

- **Touchmark Ministry:** Beginning in early 2025, Olivet was invited to serve Touchmark’s dementia care center by offering monthly devotions and prayer. On the first Friday of each month, this ministry provides a meaningful time of connection for residents and their families.
- **Caregiver Support Group:** In partnership with the Alzheimer’s Association, Olivet continues to host a monthly caregiver support group on the third Thursday of each month. All are welcome. In 2026, we hope to expand caregiver support programming in collaboration with our local Alzheimer’s Association chapter.
- **Care Ministries:** Many dedicated volunteers support care ministries through prayer shawls, prayer, card making, and letter writing. These acts of care provide comfort, connection, and love to those who receive them.
- **Continuing Education:** Ongoing learning in whole-person health—body, mind, and spirit—remains a priority. In 2025, continuing education included attendance at the National Foot Care Association annual conference in Minneapolis, as well as local trainings on addiction, advance directives, caregiver support, healthy aging, and mental health and well-being. Community partnerships, such as the local Aging Coalition, NDSU Extension, and HERO, continue to provide education, collaboration, and support throughout the year.

**Looking to the year ahead, Olivet’s Health Ministry will continue to grow in ways that honor our calling to care for one another with compassion and purpose.** Planned additions such as the Age Mastery Program, Resilience Retreat (with Pastor Hope), and a Caregiver Support Education Series will offer meaningful education, connection, and spiritual grounding for our congregation and community. **We invite all who feel called—whether to attend, learn, or serve—to join in this shared ministry of presence, encouragement, and hope.**

With a grateful heart,  
 Bev Gravdahl, MS, BSN, RN Parish Nurse | Gerontologist | Foot Care Specialist



# GET INVOLVED

## VOLUNTEER

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Do you want to meet people at church? Show your commitment to putting your faith in action? Olivet is always seeking volunteers to fill a wide variety of roles – from coffee servers and ushers to shelter volunteers and audio/visual roles. There is a place for you to get involved no matter your availability or skillset.

Regular opportunities to volunteer include:

- Ushers
- Communion servers
- Communion runners
- Greeters
- Scripture readers
- Audio/visual techs
- Music ministries
- Olivet visitors
- Health ministries
- Confirmation leaders
- Sunday/Wednesday school teachers

## SHARE

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We are excited to see, share, and promote the wonderful things that happen both at Olivet and beyond our walls. We invite you to share your Olivet experience with friends and family, either via word of mouth or social media. We also like to celebrate YOU, so we want to hear about all of your amazing achievements. Please let us know the great things you're up to so we can share them with your Olivet family. Email [news@olivet.org](mailto:news@olivet.org) or call the church office at 701.235.6603 to share your news.

## SUPPORT

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When you make financial contributions to Olivet, you are supporting our ministries which seek to support and transform the community around us. Aside from Sunday and Wednesday worship offering, there are several other means in which you can contribute regularly or as you are able.

- Online donations via debit/credit card
- Automatic bank drafts
- Mail donations to the church
- Participate in special appeals or campaigns as needs arise
- Encourage your child or youth to participate in the Sunday / Wednesday school offering that is used to support the children we sponsor through Lutheran Partners in Global Ministry

To learn more about giving options, please visit [www.olivet.org/give](http://www.olivet.org/give) or call the church office at 701.235.6603.

## SERVE

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If you would like to be more engaged and active with the church, we invite you to consider serving on our church council, foundation board, or on a committee. Or, if you are passionate about bringing something new to the church, we'd love to hear your ideas.

**To learn where you can share your time and talents, or where volunteer openings may exist, please contact Carrie Schieve at [cschieve@olivet.org](mailto:cschieve@olivet.org)**

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### JENICA BOELTER

Sunday and Wednesday School Music

### PATTI HALL

Youth Choir

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