St. Andrew's Lutheran Church

2001- 2026

There is one body

and one spirit,

as there is also

one hope

held out in

God's call to you;

one Lord,

one faith,

one baptism;

one God and

Father of all

and through all

and in all.

-Ephesians 4:4-5

St. Andrew's Lutheran Church 2001- 2026

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St. Andrew's Lutheran Church
2001-2026

WHO WE ARE

At the 75-year mark, St. Andrew's continues to be a vibrant church, rooted in the love of God made known in Christ Jesus. We sum this up with our vision statement adopted in 2023: *We Live in and Share God's Love with ALL*! As St. Andrew's seeks to live out this vision more completely each day, we join in God's mission to share God's love. We share the good news of freedom from sin and death made possible in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. St. Andrew's is guided by the following values, which support the vision:

- ***Unconditional Love –*** *We strive to be the open arms of Jesus Christ as he revealed God's love by embracing the broken, welcoming the outcast, and giving his life on the cross.*
- ***Meaningful Worship –*** *Worship focused on God, God's Word and sacraments, and invites genuine praise and meaningful encounter with God in Christ.*
- ***Radical Hospitality –*** *Going the extra mile to welcome and include all people into our life as a congregation and individuals.*
- ***Faithful Service –*** *Service to the local, national, and global community that abundantly shares God's love as the hands, feet and open arms of Jesus.*
- ***Selfless Generosity –*** *Sharing what God has first given us in ways that show the abundance of God's grace.*
- ***Compassionate Care –*** *Sharing God's love and care for family, friends, members, neighbors, and the world*.

The faithful generosity, leadership, and service of St. Andrew's members have laid a firm foundation upon which this church has shared the gospel of Jesus in word and deed for 75 years. This firm foundation gives St. Andrew's solid footing to dream boldly about the future God is at work bringing in and through the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Sonja M. Gerstenberger

CURRENT STAFF AND LEADERSHIP TEAM

Pastor & Staff

Pastor	Sonja M. Gerstenberger
Office Administrator	Heidi LoRash
Business Manager	David Krumm
Dir., Music Ministries & Choir Director	Steven Hoifeldt
Organist	Isaiah Walsh
Choir Accompanist & Ensemble Director	Connie Sweeney

Church Council

Officers

President	Shelley Ackermann
Vice President	Dan Andersen
Secretary	Anna Radke
Treasurer	Mike Van Vertloo

At-Large Members

Janet Dixon
Laurie Evans
Mary Johnson
Kris Parsons
Deb Schlieman
Pastor Sonja Gerstenberger

Congregation Committees and Chairs

Executive	Shelley Ackermann, Council President
Nominating	Shelley Ackermann, Council President
Audit	Don Behning, Dave Putz, Carla Sacco
Personnel	Shelley Ackermann, Council President
Mutual Ministry	Al Jergens
Extended Ministry Fund	Lynn Miller

Council Standing Committees and Chairs

Worship & Arts	Mary Johnson
Fellowship	Lori Paulson
Property	Randy Sacco, Linda Seaverson, Co-chairs
Stewardship & Finance	Janet Dixon, Carla Sacco, Co-chairs
Outreach	Linda Hansen
Social Concerns	Janeen Christy
Fellowship	Lori Paulson
Service N Learning	Kristine Andersen

(*Education and Youth merged to form this new committee*)

Ministry Teams and Leaders

Pine Ridge Ministry	Kris Parsons
Tanzania Ministry	Carol Putz
Local Ministries	
Edwards Elementary Snack Ministry	Mary Johnson
Saving Suds	Mary Johnson
Food at First	Matthew Martens
Blessing Box	Social Concerns Committee
Ames Interfaith Refugee Alliance	Janeen Christy
Faith Formation Ministries	
Faith Study Group	Matthew Martens
Service N Learning	Kristine Andersen

CURRENT PROGRAMS OF MINISTRY

Reconciling in Christ

In May 2025, St. Andrew's Lutheran Church voted overwhelmingly in favor of becoming a ***Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation*** within the ELCA. With this vote, we affirmed our congregation's explicit commitment to welcoming all to participate in the life of the church, as follows:

We are a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In keeping with the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, we are a progressive Ames church joyfully and unconditionally welcoming all people of any age, gender, race, culture, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression into our community of faith. We affirm the worth of all people as unique individuals made in God's image. We are committed to racial equity and anti-racism. We are open to the special gifts that each person brings and invite each to participate in the life of our church.

St. Andrew's embodied this RIC commitment in specific ways in 2025:

- Celebrated our RIC status with a special fellowship hour (September)
- Participated in Ames PrideFest (October)
- Participated in Ames' Ecumenical Pride Worship Service on the campus of ISU (October)
- Made a meaningful financial contribution to Reconciling Works, the RIC parent organization
- Added our welcome statement and the RIC logo to our signage, social media platforms, and internal communications
- Continued book studies and conversations around what it means to be an RIC congregation and how we can live out radical hospitality

Attaining RIC status is undoubtedly cause for much joy and celebration. However, as we often said throughout the two-year study and discernment period, attaining this status isn't the end-point. We will continue to discuss and to educate ourselves on how we can continue to embody this commitment as a congregation. Anyone is welcome to participate in this dialogue.

The Reconciling in Christ Task Force
Janeen Christy
Laurie Hoifeldt
Pauline Miller
Anna Radke
Pastor Sonja Gerstenberger

Pine Ridge Ministry

The Early Years

What we know today as Pine Ridge Ministry Team (PRMT) began as a one-off youth trip in 2003, led by Becky Kocourek, Youth Director. Offered several options, the high school youth group chose to go to Pine Ridge. That first trip was co-led by counselors from Lutherans Outdoors, based in Custer, SD, and they stayed at the Lutheran/Presbyterian Retreat Center in the village of Pine Ridge. Phil Meraz, from St. Andrew's, went along to be the male chaperone and help with cooking. The group was about a dozen and traveled in a van.

On a typical day that week, Pastor Larry from the Retreat Center, Becky, and two counselors, took the youth to build projects all morning. Phil stayed at the center to work on the next meal and prepare 100 cheese sandwiches to be given out to homeless folks in the late afternoon. Lunch was either out and hosted by someone or back at the center. Afternoons were spent hosting 30 to 50 children in the basement of the center for Kid Time. Semi-organized chaos of games, reading, and crafts ensued! Evenings were dinner and a speaker at the center or a hosted dinner and a speaker in the community.

St. Andrew's relationship with Pine Ridge could have ended after that first trip except for one thing… the following year the youth all wanted to return to Pine Ridge. So, the second year was like the first, except the group was larger and required more vehicles and a second cook. Dave Krumm signed on as driver and second cook. Lodging and program were the same. That year Dave and Phil helped Pastor Larry install air conditioning in the center. This was also the year that we met Emma "Pinky" Clifford, a 5'2" dynamo who would become a great friend, mentor, and guide to all things "Rez." We would never have survived without her.

Lodging was not available at the center the third year, and Pinky invited us to stay with her in Manderson. Seventeen of us stayed in a single-wide trailer with a single bathroom and resident rattlesnake. Instead of going out for projects, we built a bunkhouse. This was phase one of what Pinky hoped would be a village of tiny homes. By the middle of the week, the boys and Becky's husband Dan were moving in at night and out in the morning so construction could continue.

For the next several years this pattern held: Youth trip in the summer with building projects, Kid Time in the park, tours to interesting and educational spots. And, we started to develop relationships with the people of Manderson. We became the group that could "fix things," and Pinky always had a list of projects in the community.

The Interim Years

After Becky left St. Andrew's, trips began to be more multi-generational. Summer trips still revolved around youth, and more trips were added in spring and fall for adults. Projects also became larger and more complicated, often involving multiple trips per year. St. Andrew's did a solo build of the Jean Jumping Eagle home over a two-year time-frame.

We also got more collaborative. We began doing Kid Time with the local Catholic church. We did community feeds in Manderson and Pine Ridge with the local churches and in Kyle with Oyate Teca at a youth and family outreach center. We took on the lead role for the Hancock House project in Pine Ridge, coordinating both on-Rez and off-Rez groups, including Windsor Heights Lutheran and Pastor Chris from Des Moines. Gilbert Lutheran also was led by our Pine Ridge

Ministry Team on a trip, and they built a 12' by 20' deck with stairs. We've collaborated with folks from Maine, Tennessee, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming, along with Rez partners.

We converted the walkout basement of "Uncle Tommy's" into what became St. Andrew's home base. We added two bathrooms and built five bedrooms, a tool closet, and a living room. Members of St. Andrew's gathered at Dave Krumm's barn and cut parts and pre-assembled 14 sets of bunk beds which were then trucked out and installed.

We spent several years being "the painters." We painted St. Agnus Catholic Church and parsonage exterior, and the interior of the Manderson Community Center where elderly meals are served, among other things.

During all this activity we started what we now know as "truck trips," taking supplies and housewares and clothing to various agencies. Kris Parsons has been the driving force for this effort. We don't (often) distribute directly to individuals, preferring to let the agencies determine where the needs are greatest. We have worked with the local veterans, local churches, the Retreat Center, Danny's store in Porcupine, Pinky's store in Manderson, Oyate Teca in Kyle, and others, to get things contributed here out to those in need. Everything was working great, until…

Covid

We had trips planned and truck loads in various warehouses ready to go when everything shut down. But the needs didn't go away, they just shifted. The friendships didn't stop, they just became social distanced. Pinky, who runs a small grocery, called and said she couldn't find hand sanitizer or toilet paper at the wholesale level. So, we went into manufacturing sanitizer! Dave Krumm and Phil Meraz made a non-stop trip to deliver all the ingredients, and tools and bottles, for 100 gallons. They spent twenty-six hours on the road eating food from home, stopping only for gas, and wearing face masks. Pinky had to meet us at the Rez border with a letter from the Tribal President to get us past the guards.

That fall and winter we paid for propane to heat the border guard houses and provided winter gear for the folks manning the borders, trying to keep the people safe. And truck trips continued. We rented storage in Gordon, 20 miles off the Rez. We would make a deposit of supplies, it would sit for two weeks in quarantine, and some folks would go pick it up for distribution.

Today

Friendships continue to thrive. Although we have lost several good friends on the Rez, we gain new ones every year. It is unlikely we will ever build another complete house, but smaller projects are getting done. Truck trips happen on a regular basis. We know that a medium-sized church, 500 miles from the Rez, can't "fix" anything on the Rez. But we can, and do, make a difference by walking alongside our friends, our neighbors. We try hard to make things a little better and remind them that they are not alone. We "do" the work, we "are" the Word made active, and we all, here and on the Rez, experience the love of community. We spread HOPE on the Rez. We advocate and educate at home. We live out the gospel but don't preach it. And in return we are well cared for, prayed for, and welcomed into community.

Kris Parsons and Dave Krumm

Tanzania Ministry

The Tanzania Ministry Team Mission Statement:
To support the spiritual growth of the communities of St. Andrew's Lutheran Church with Hedaru Lutheran Parish and Agape Lutheran Parish of Tanzania, we will build relationships through prayer, communication and communal support that seek to understand each other's unique roles within the Body of Christ.

The Tanzania Ministry Team's goals are to work with Hedaru and Agape Lutheran Parishes to 1) oversee the companionships, 2) engage in activities that build relationships, 3) encourage faith-sharing between the churches, and 4) work on projects together.

The first trip to Tanzania was in January of 2006 with four members from St. Andrew's Lutheran Church. A second trip was taken in October of 2006 with six members from St. Andrew's Lutheran Church. A discussion was held with the people in Hedaru about what was most important to the community. They chose water because of the drought. We came home to see if the church was willing to take on a fundraiser for a water project that was substantial. And, the Tanzanians worked with a water engineer to create a workable plan.

From 2008 – 2010 trips to Tanzania were focused on work for the water project. The water project was complete in 2010 and we began looking to see what other projects could be done together. Integrated farming was suggested. In May of 2010, St. Andrew's hosted four members from Hedaru including Pastor Luhwa.

The trip in 2011 was focused on nanny goats. The project began with learning animal husbandry with goats. Around this time, we joined forces with Empower Tanzania to be more efficient financially and to share our experience with them.

Two trips were taken in 2012 where the focus changed to gardening, using the manure from the goats, and the increased amount of water available from the water project. Also, during this time we continued to expand the number of goat farmers and their level of education. While in Tanzania we also spent time with the women doing cooking and quilting projects.

In 2013, our big event for the year was to host four church members from Hedaru, including the pastor, Zabori. They spent a lot of time meeting people from St. Andrew's and learning the culture of the United States.

In the 2014 trip, Chickens for Change was added to our farming project. Church members traveled with the Southeastern Iowa Synod for a combined trip.

In 2015, a trip was not taken but we continued to work long-distance with project managers on all the farming projects. We also started a project at the orphanage in Hedaru for rainwater catchment, a kitchen garden, and a chicken farm.

In 2016, St. Andrew's sent money to help buy a van for a women's group at the parish, and the chicken and orphanage projects continued. A member traveled to Hedaru in January.

Trips were taken to Tanzania in 2017 and 2018. Work on the projects were continued and relationships were deepened.

In 2019, the youth from St. Andrew's went to Tanzania in partnership with Bethesda Lutheran Church. The youth helped build a church in Agape.

Covid hit in 2020, so no trips to Tanzania were taken. Hedaru Lutheran Church started building an English-speaking elementary school. Hedaru Lutheran Church split into two separate parishes. The other parish was named Agape. We agreed to be companions with both parishes.

In 2021-2023, a rooftop rainwater catchment system for the village of Katahe was built. No trip was taken because of Covid. The church continues to build onto the school.

In January 2024, six members of St. Andrew's went to Tanzania. We had not been to Tanzania since 2020 so we spent our time visiting many parishes and reconnecting with old friends.

October 2025 was our next trip to Tanzania. The Pare Diocese of Tanzania was having its Jubilee Celebration (50 years as a diocese). A delegation of five people, including Southeastern Iowa Synod Bishop Amy Current, attended the festivities. We also helped raise funds for a school bus the school purchased and helped celebrate the official opening of the Hedaru school which is named St. Andrew's Pre & Primary School.

Deb Schlieman

Local Ministries

Edwards Elementary & Saving Suds

Edwards Elementary

The goal of the Edwards Elementary Back-Pack Ministry was to provide disadvantaged families with items to celebrate birthdays and Christmas. In the fall of 2011, Mary Johnson met with the principal, Mr. Pedersen, and the staff of Edwards Elementary. It had been recommended by our congregation that we would like a partnership with our neighborhood school. We asked them how we might support the students and staff. It was decided that we would start a back pack program at Edwards. We continued this program until Covid closed the schools. In the first year we handed out about a dozen bags, and when we ended in 2020 we were up to 60 bags.

The teachers also suggested that snacks for the classroom would meet a need for children with few resources. These snacks would be used to help celebrate birthdays as many families did not have the needed money to supply treats. The snacks were then made available to the students to hand out on their birthday. St. Andrew's continue to provide snacks.

For several years the school family counselor, Pam Sassman, provided us with the names of three families who could use some help at Christmas. She provided us with a "wish list" from the families. Tags were hung on a Christmas tree in the Narthex. The congregation generously purchased and wrapped the gifts, and Mary Johnson delivered them. The school district asked us to discontinue this project, due to confidentiality issues.

Saving Suds

In the fall of 2019, the Edwards Team approached the council and asked permission to start funding a laundry project. We had no idea what the need was or how much money was needed. With council approval, we went to the youth group and asked for help creating a name. After some discussion, they landed on "Saving Suds on Lincoln Way."

The ministry launched in 2020, and the first year was very slow as it was the middle of a pandemic. Mary Johnson sat in her car and handed out quarters. Our year-end total was 25 families and $323.00 in quarters distributed.

In 2021 Bethesda joined St. Andrew's. Bethesda serves at the laundromat on the first Thursday of the month and St. Andrew's on the third Thursday. Saving Suds has continued to grow, and in 2025 we served 313 families and gave out $8,017 in quarters. We also provide snacks, detergent pods, and Raising Readers provides books.

We are grateful to St. Andrew's and the Ames community for supporting this ministry.

Mary Johnson

Food at First

During the parish renewal period at St. Andrew's, starting in 2021, it seemed a good opportunity to get active in the Ames meal site for the hungry, Food at First, the oldest and largest interchurch ministry in Ames. Matthew Martens helped lead the effort to get St. Andrew's a regular evening in the monthly rotation of churches and service organizations serving meals at Food at First, starting October 6, 2022. About a dozen volunteers were recruited to help in this ministry.

When our team arrives on the first Thursday of each month, there are usually about 85 guests waiting for the meal. Some folks are homeless, others have a variety of disabilities, some are recent immigrants. All are hungry! We jump in to assist with last-minute meal preparation, plating the desserts and salads, and setting the items from oven and stove on the long counter from which we serve the meal. The guests pass through the serving line while we fill the plates. Sometimes there is time for servers to eat with guests, but other times, especially if we have team members absent, we just transition from serving into the clean-up. Every surface is wiped down and cleaned in the dining room, kitchen, and bathrooms. Having started at 5:20, we usually are finishing about 7:30 pm.

Food at First now serves 35,000 meals a year, with an average of 85 persons eating per day, and 22,000 guests also using the Free Market held on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings. There are more than 350 active volunteers, including the 14 of us from St. Andrew's Lutheran. Special events include festive dinners served on Thanksgiving and Christmas, averaging 700-950 guests. The only paid staff is Patty Yoder, Executive Director. Currently serving on our team are Dan Andersen, Ruth and Rick Bloxham, Janet & Philip Dixon, Laurie Evans, Lynette Jensen, Matthew Martens, Les & Pauline Miller, Tom Prochnow, Carla Sacco, Deb Schlieman, and Mike, Cole and Edwin Van Vertloo.

The Food at First ministry team seeks to not only feed hungry bodies, but also to feed hungry spirits. When we go to the meal site, we take along our smiles, our patience, our prayers, our helpfulness, our good will, and our

readiness to interact and build relationships with the guests, the staff, and each other on the team. Every serving occasion is an opportunity to practice inclusive, non-judgmental hospitality.

The Food at First organization is presently planning to build a new and larger facility, dedicated solely to this ministry, near the Furniture Mart off Duff Ave. Soon the churches and other service organizations will be raising funds to support this project and St. Andrew's has committed funds in support. We feel privileged to be part of the ministry to the hungry in Ames.

Matthew Martens

Blessing Box

In 2017, the St. Andrew's youth group was inspired by the many Little Free Libraries in the community and envisioned a similar ministry to provide food and essential items to our neighbors. They decided to build a box to be placed on the front lawn, where it would be available to all.

Under the guidance of youth leaders Blythe and Kaitlyn Schultz, the project became a reality. Blythe, constructed the box, and the youth group painted and decorated it. The Blessing Box was installed in October 2017 as a visible expression of St. Andrew's commitment to serving the community.

Members volunteer to stock the blessing box, currently coordinated by the Social Concerns Committee. It is regularly stocked with non-perishable items and toiletries. Thanks to the generosity of this congregation, the box has remained well stocked, serving our neighbors.

In spring 2026, the Blessing Box was repaired and relocated to a more accessible spot adjacent to the parking lot. In this spot, it continues to be a welcoming source of care and compassion.

Social Concerns Committee

Ames Interfaith Refugee Alliance (AIRA)

Ames Interfaith Refugee Alliance is a collaboration of volunteers and non-profits seeking to advocate for and raise awareness of refugees, to have Ames included as a site for refugee resettlement, and to support refugees in the community to help promote their independence and success.

Operating under the funding umbrella of AXIOM, AIRA exists to make Ames and Story County a welcoming place for refugees from around the world. It does this through assisting arriving and former refugees in becoming self-sufficient, educating the community about refugees, advocating on behalf of refugees, and helping newcomers remain in the U.S. legally. At the end of 2025, AIRA had assisted approximately 75 refugees from Ukraine, Haiti, and South Sudan. St. Andrew's Lutheran members have made significant contributions of time, talent, and money to AIRA.

St. Andrew's members support this ministry of accompaniment in substantial ways:

- Through generous financial gifts
- Sponsoring families and completing immigration paperwork
- Serving on the AIRA Board of Directors and committees
- Providing transportation and driving lessons
- Serving as English tutors and conversation partners
- Helping families move into independent housing
- Donating bikes, household items and furniture
- Helping with job searches
- Providing companionship to help families navigate personal challenges

AIRA continues to navigate difficult political and policy changes by offering stability, support. and advocacy for refugees, humanitarian parolees, and asylum seekers in Ames and Story County.

Janeen Christy

FAITH FORMATION MINISTRIES

Faith Study Group

After a hiatus due to Covid, the Wednesday Morning Faith Study Group was re-started in October of 2022 by David Krumm and Matthew Martens. Longest-time member, Glynn Frank, remembers the group going back at least 40 years. While it had been a men's study group those first 40 years, it re-started as a gender-inclusive group. It now has 12-15 in attendance, with members gathering to eat breakfast and then spending 45 minutes in discussion of the current topic.

All St. Andrew's members and friends are welcome to join the group, which meets on Wednesdays at 7:30 am at Hy Vee West Grille. Some recent books discussed have included: *The Tears of Things*, *God and Empire*, *The Church Cracked Open,* and *Together by Grace – Conversations with Matthew*. Living in a time of spiritual and political tension, the group has doubled in size over the past few years, with people eager to converse on current topics.

Matthew Martens

Service N Learning

In 2022 the legacy Adult Forum was replaced with a new Sunday morning education programming format to adapt to changing membership demographics. Sunday School and Adult Education joined forces to become Service N Learning. On Sundays we gather at 9 am in Fellowship Hall to learn about the fundamentals of faith life, hear about a local, national or international service effort, and apply our learning through service.

A variety of activities are planned to be accessible for all ages, proving something for everyone. Most importantly, we learn and grow together as a community of faith and members of the body of Christ. In addition, Service N Learning hosts Christmas and Easter community events each year with food, activities, and fun for the community. Wherever you find yourself on your faith journey, your age, or your life circumstance, there is a place for YOU here.

Kristine Andersen

VISUAL ARTS

Cross of Mission

In honor of the sanctuary's 60th anniversary, the Worship and Arts Committee launched a fundraising campaign to install a cross on the front lawn. Several years earlier, a large tree had come down in a storm, leaving space for a garden and the church sign. The committee agreed that a cross would be a meaningful addition to this prominent location.

The congregation generously supported the project, and the necessary funds were raised in 2022. The cross was fabricated by Sargent Metal Fabricating and was installed in 2023. It serves as a visible expression of faith and a reminder of God's enduring presence throughout the life of St. Andrew's. As both members and visitors pass by, the cross bears witness to the hope and promise found in Jesus Christ.

Mary Johnson

Sanctuary Sculpture

The Worship and Arts Committee began fundraising for a sculpture in December of 2013 in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Sanctuary. It was designed by Rev. H.A. Muus, an ELCA Pastor from Grand Marais, Minnesota. It was fabricated by Pearson Metal Art in Radcliffe, Iowa.

The design and focus of this piece represent mission outreach. It is designed to underscore the essential mission at St. Andrew's. It informs us that in and through Christ we are free to reach out to all people – to every corner of our community and the world. The "arms" of this cross are those of us at St. Andrew's carrying out our mission to the global community, connected to the "Christ core" of our life.

The bands shape a globe. The cross of outreaching arms is anchored in Christ, the center. As we envision this symbol, we can see ourselves: reaching out, honoring above, caring below. We are captured and yet freed in a world of wonder and complexity.

Mary Johnson

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Madrigal Dinner & Renaissance Faire

The idea for a madrigal dinner was hatched in 2007 as a way to get youth interested and looking forward to a major event. The first annual Madrigal Dinner was held in 2008 as part of the Faith Family Fun Nights and met with overwhelming enthusiasm. Congregation members from age 5-80 participated, with all sharing their individual talents: youth juggled, acted in a major play, and served as singers sang and instrumentalists performed period music, the kitchen staff outdid themselves with a delicious meal, and Fellowship Hall was transformed into the Great Room of a castle.

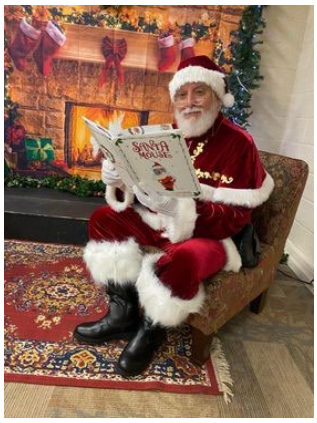
This success led to opening the evening to the public the following year as an outreach event, and it continued as a beloved tradition for 12 years. Covid hit in 2020, and so ended the madrigal dinners.

After Covid, St. Andrew's wanted to tell the community that we were still here, and that all are welcome. Something outdoors seemed ideal. As organizers considered themes for a fall outreach event, an outdoor Renaissance Faire seemed like the logical next move – the costumes were available, the music was familiar, plus we have a beautiful front yard. We brainstormed, gathered up tents and banners, created themes for booths, planned games and food, and invited the entire community to our Renaissance village! Again, the response was overwhelming, and we are now planning our 2026 RenFaire for Reformation Sunday in October.

Laurie Hoifeldt

Easter and Christmas Community Events

St. Andrew's Church currently hosts annual community Christmas and Easter events to welcome families and neighbors. Each event typically attracts between 50 and 100 community members, with attendance consisting primarily of local families.



While the activities vary from year to year, the purpose remains the same: to provide a welcoming space for fellowship, celebration, and community. Past events have included Easter egg hunts, Christmas meals and food baskets for families, crafts, games, music, and other seasonal activities. Every event includes opportunities for families to gather, enjoy food, and celebrate together.

These events reflect St. Andrew's commitment to sharing Christ's love through hospitality and service. We are grateful for the generosity and dedication of the congregation, whose volunteers make it possible to open doors and create meaningful experiences that strengthen relationships within the community.

Kristine Andersen – Chair, Service N Learning Committee

STAFF AND CONGREGATION PRESIDENTS

Pastors and Staff

Pastors

Christopher D. Olkiewicz	July 2001 – November 2009
David Cline (Interim)	June 2010 – December 2010
Elizabeth J. Bachman Caulfield	January 2011 – April 2018
Jeffery W. Alvestad (Interim)	February 2019 – January 2021
Sonja M. Gerstenberger	March 2021- present

Youth Ministries/Family & Youth Ministries

Kyle Petersen	2002
Becky Kocourek-Scharnhorst	2003-2007
Kristin Johnson (Associate in Ministry)	2008-2010
Ellen Rothweiller	2012-2015
Tim Jacobsen	2012-2014
Michelle Rowe	2016
Megan Gawik	2016-2017
Kaitlyn & Blythe Schultz	2017-2021
Courtney Anderson	2022

Administrative Assistants

Karen Comstock	2002
Cathy Hammel	2003-2004
Paula Ray	2005-2011
Shelly Pearson	2012
Mary Sue Derks	2014-2015
Becky Kerr	2015
Heather Eddy	2015-2021
Laurie Hoifelt	2020 Covid interim
Miriam Moreno	2022-2023
Jazmine Vega	2023-2024
Heidi LoRash	2024-present

Financial

Paula Ray, Financial Secretary	2005-2011
David Krumm, Business Manager	2023-present

Director of Music Ministries/Choir Directors

Kreg Harper	2002-2006
Steven Hoifeldt	2006-present

Organist/Pianist

Berniece Fullhart	2002-2005
Sarah Buck	2005-2023
Isaiah Walsh	2023-2024
Sawyer Schiffler	2024-2025
Bonnie Corron Strong	2025 (Substitute)
Isaiah Walsh	2025-present

Choir Accompanist

Connie Sweeney	2002– present

Ensemble Director

Sarah Buck	2002-2004 (volunteer)
Connie Sweeney	2005-present

Events Coordinator

Lisa Loucks	2023-2024

Custodians

Harold Dorr	2002–2014 (Tony Rizi assistant)
Gary Deal	2017-2021
Emily Bruce	2022
Ken Harris	2022

Building Maintenance

Charles Fullhart	2003

Congregation Presidents

Randy Leuth	2002
Beth Wessel-Kroeschell	2003
David Krumm	2004
Laura Lee	2005
Jon-Scott Johnson	2006
Susan Teas	2007
Ken Israel	2008
Marty Kemp	2009
Bill Koenig	2010
Jeff Pearson	2011
David Krumm	2012
Linda Seaverson	2013, 2014
Daryle Vegge	2015
Mary Lokken	2016, 2017
Amanda Ahrens	2018, 2019
Laurie Hoifeldt	2020
David Putz	2021, 2022
Randy Sacco	2022, 2023
Lori Paulson	2024
Mike Van Vertloo	2025
Shelley Ackermann	2026

Highlights of Past St. Andrew's Ministries

Pastor Olkiewicz (2001-2009)

Pastor Chris Olkiewicz was a pastor at St. John's Lutheran in Des Moines when contacted by the St. Andrew's call committee. At St. Andrew's, Pastor Chris worked well with a part-time administrative staff and part-time youth director to lead a council and congregation with lots of ideas and opinions.

A first change for the council, as remembered by some, was to convert four-hour marathon meetings to 90-minute assessment and decision-making events. Others found that, as a cyclist, he could converse continuously on his weekly "50-mile Monday," if you could keep up with him.

Two ministry teams were started during Pastor Chris' tenure, Pine Ridge and Tanzania. Pine Ridge started out as youth ministry, conducted by Youth Director Becky Kocourek. When she moved on, Pastor Chris encouraged the congregation to continue and expand this ministry. He was an active participant throughout his time at St. Andrew's and even beyond at his subsequent parish, Windsor Heights Lutheran Church, where he led a youth group for a week at Pine Ridge.

The Tanzania ministry was proposed by a small group of parishioners who saw an opportunity to address basic physical and spiritual needs of an African community. The community water project was an early example of the Tanzania Team providing for fundamental human needs and was followed by housing and school construction projects.

A notable ministry-supporting initiative launched during Pastor Chris' tenure was the establishment of the Extended Ministry Fund in 2004. Its purpose is to provide a way to manage donations for projects and needs beyond the congregational budget. One of the first major projects was the design and construction of the columbarium, built in 2006. Other Extended Ministry Fund resources were used to support the Tanzania ministry and provide scholarships for St. Andrew's youth to attend college.

David Krumm

Pastor Bachman Caulfield (2011-2018)

During Pastor Beth Bachman Caulfield's time at St. Andrew's, the congregation continued to grow and strengthen its ministries while also making significant investments in the church itself. She, her husband Chris, and their girls became an active part of St. Andrew's.

Youth and faith formation were a focus. Pastor Beth worked with Director of Faith Life Ellen Rothweiler and Youth Director Tim Jacobson to build opportunities for all kids – young and old.

Pastor Beth participated in the madrigals, lending her voice to the head table, and enjoyed the music St. Andrew's shared as part of ministry and worship. These madrigals and Easter breakfasts helped support both ministries and youth trips.

Service and outreach continued to be an important part of St. Andrew's during these years. The Pine Ridge Ministry remained very active, and the relationship with the Hedaru community in Tanzania continued to grow through visits. Pastor Beth helped host visitors from Tanzania in 2013.

Pastor Beth served during a time of much activity, which contributed to the need to update St. Andrew's Fellowship Hall. Those who interacted with her often likely will remember her broad smile and love of a good cup of tea.

David Putz

The Interim, Ending in the Covid Year (2018-2020)

As 2020 began, the new St. Andrew's Church Council was busy planning for the new year and doing business as usual until March, when the Covid pandemic began, and the world stopped. In-person worship and meetings were cancelled. Livestream equipment was put into place immediately so there was no interruption in worship services. Interim Pastor Jeff Alvestad preached from the sanctuary, and small worship teams, consisting mostly of choir members, were dispersed throughout the sanctuary and choir loft to provide music leadership.

Care for our neighbor was first on our minds, so small groups were created to keep in touch with each other through email or phone. The Friday Flash newsletter was created to keep congregation members aware of what was happening, and Council learned how to hold Zoom meetings and joked that we all looked like players on Hollywood Squares (which only those of a certain age will remember!)

Also, during 2020, a call committee searched for a new pastor by use of Zoom meetings, phone calls, and emails. Pastor Sonja Gerstenberger was called and began her call in March 2021. Her first introduction to the congregation was a drive-by wave-and-hello through the church parking lot on her first Sunday. St. Andrew's is grateful for the gracious support of the Synod during this unconventional call process.

Covid was awful, but it inspired innovations that have remained and continue to improve our worship, connection, and outreach, that now are led by Pastor Sonja as described above in the current ministry sections.

Laurie Hoifeldt

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St. Andrew's Lutheran Church

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