

EASTSIDE LUTHERAN CHURCH COMMUNITY

We had a heart-warming and productive gathering of the ELCC Advisory Board and stakeholders on Saturday, January 10, 2026. There was representation from Saint Luke's, Saint Andrew's, Cross of Christ, Our Savior, Sammamish Hills, Mount Si, Love of Christ, Grace Sammamish Chinese, and Faith Lutheran churches. With well over 20 people in attendance, it was exciting to feel the energy in the room. Synod coaches, Jane Prestbye and Gary Rothenberger provided invaluable guidance and direction for our exploration and discussions. We are so blessed to have them!

ELCC ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

Pastor Mark of Saint Luke's shared that the clergy leadership continues to collaborate on various aspects of the ministry. Opportunities for joint worship (Good Friday, Outdoor service, etc.) will continue and hopefully expand. It was emphasized that there needs to be a focus on finding ways to enhance the work of our pastors without adding any more duties. For example, could a pastor develop a sermon that could then be delivered to all of the participating churches over a period of time? That would presumably free other pastors to work on things that give them joy during this time. This duty would be rotated so that all could partake.

Bill Brueggemann with Saint Andrew's talked about how most of the churches have been working toward using common software (Tithe.ly, QuickBooks Online, etc.), to adopt best practices, and enable administrative work to be streamlined and managed by fewer people. A bookkeeper has already been contracted to serve several churches. This has proven to be hugely successful. This bookkeeper has capacity to serve additional churches when they choose to do so.

Pastor Krista of Mount Si told us about the work of ELF (Eastside Lutheran Fellowship) – a coalition of church programs that engage youth from various congregations. There is a joint confirmation program, Vacation Bible School, service projects, mission trips and fellowship opportunities such as Game Night. Doug Johnson also now serves as Youth Minister to both Saint Andrews and Sammamish Hills. We believe there is an opportunity to expand this program if desired.

ELCC NEWSLETTER

Many in our meeting acknowledged that communication is vital if we are to keep momentum within the ELCC. More people within our congregations need to learn about what it is and become involved with its future. It was suggested that we create a monthly ELCC Newsletter to share information on what is happening within the ELCC. The emphasis will be on informing everyone of opportunities to participate in various activities to foster fellowship, faith, and connections.

EXPANDING ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE ELCC

It is recognized that most everyone seeks a sense of community. How can we best provide that in coming together as the ELCC? How might we enhance the work we are already doing? How do we engage a broad range of people to build a sense of community, engagement, and commitment?

After some discernment, we landed on four areas that we would like to focus on:

- **MUSIC**

- **SMALL GROUP MINISTRY**
- **MISSION WORK**
- **COMMUNITY SERVICE.**

We want to form cross-congregational committees to bring forth ideas and implementation plans to foster fellowship in the aforementioned areas. Tentative leadership roles were identified:

- Music: TBD
- Small Group Ministry: Pastor Mark / Tom Getzinger
- Mission Work: Jean Wahlstrom
- Community Service: Nadine Bentsen / Joyce Arnold / Gail Alessio

Please note: We are anxious to find people that would be interested in exploring what might be possible by working together in these key areas. If you, or someone you know wants to learn more or be able to provide ideas or input, please contact the Committee Leader(s) noted or Carolynn Ferris (carolynn.ferris@outlook.com).

Our next in-person gathering will be on **Saturday, April 11, 2026 at Saint Luke's Lutheran Church.** Anyone interested in the work of the ELCC and its committees are welcome – ENCOURAGED! – to attend.