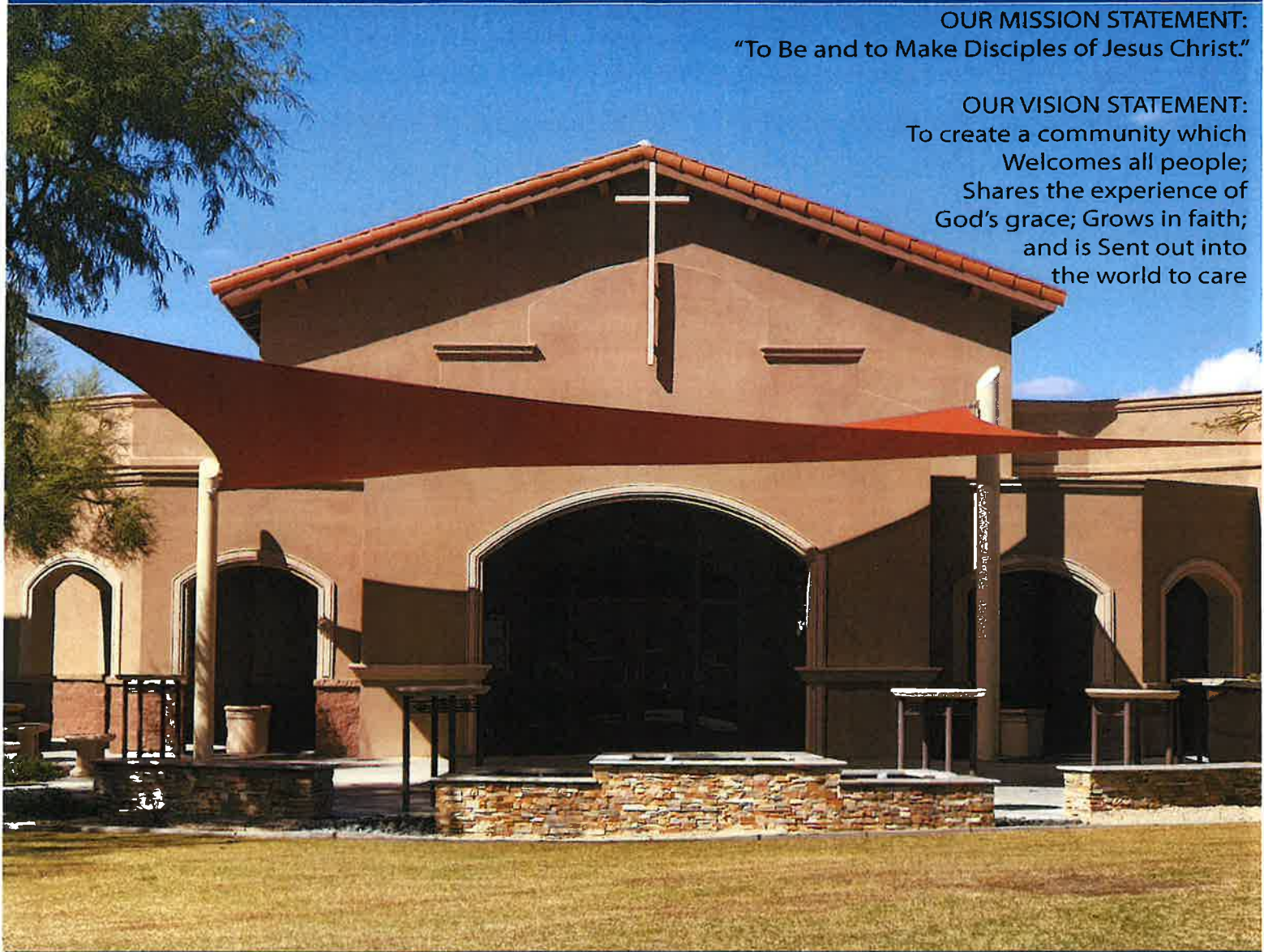


OUR FAITH IN ACTION

2025 Annual Report of the Congregation

OUR MISSION STATEMENT:
"To Be and to Make Disciples of Jesus Christ."

OUR VISION STATEMENT:
To create a community which
Welcomes all people;
Shares the experience of
God's grace; Grows in faith;
and is Sent out into
the world to care



Living Water
Lutheran Church

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(O) 480.473.8400 | (F) 480.473.2625

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**LWLC Annual Meeting will be held on
February 8, 2026 @ 11:00 am**

2025 STATISTICAL REPORT

2026 MEMBERSHIP	Baptized	Confirmed (15 years and older)
As of 1.1.2025	324	307
Members Received by New Member Class	22	22
Members Received by Transfer	x	x
Member Received by Baptism	2	x
Members Received by Confirmation	0	3
Members Removed by Death	-11	-11
Total Membership as of 12.31.2025	337	320

AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTENDANCE

2019 – 190
2020 - 235
2021 – N/A due to Covid
2022 – 130 Online -103
2023 - 118
2024 – 142 Online -117
2025 - 146 Online - 120

BAPTISMS, CONFIRMATIONS AND DEATHS **2025**

BAPTISMS – 2

Hannah Rose Haggard	3/16/2025
Spencer Donald Hall	6/29/2025

CONFIRMATIONS – 3

Jacksen Robinson	11/9/2025
Stella Robinson	11/9/2025
Kaden Roos	11/9/2025

BIRTHS – 1

Spencer Donald Hall	5/2/2025
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DEATHS – 11

Pam Landon	1/27/2025
Maria Tillotson	2/9/2025
Ruth Schlesinger	2/15/2025
Dan Bonar	3/14/2025
Jim Tonnenson	3/26/2025
Deacon Ardie Sneft	5/3/2025
Gabriele Laudenschlager	6/24/2025
Ted Stump	6/27/2025
Charlie Boyd	7/5/2025
Phil Pounds	7/5/2025
Yvonne Weber	12/10/2025

NEW MEMBERS RECEIVED – 22

Ann Madson	3/8/2025
Joe and Barb Groebner	3/8/2025
Ann Cook	3/8/2025
Zachary Haggard and Diana Nacorda	3/8/2025
David Oglesby and Cherrie Heidemann-Oglesby	3/8/2025

Mark Eisenhut	3/8/2025
Jody and John Haggard	3/8/2025
Christina and Seth Hall	8/1/2025
Jim and Allison Swanson	11/1/2025
Wendy Minkus	11/1/2025
Susan Quast	11/1/2025
Benjamin Swenson	11/1/2025
Scout Swenson	11/1/2025
Craig Swenson	11/1/2025
Bob Ringdahl	11/1/2025
Sue Martin	10/18/2025

CHURCH STAFF 2025

- ☐ **Senior Pastor and Building Manager:**
Mark Rossman
- ☐ **Pastor:** Shari Bernau
- ☐ **Office and Communications Manager:**
Jennifer Kelsh
- ☐ **Finance Manager:**
Stephanie McLean
- ☐ **Director of Music:** Christina Hall
- ☐ **Associate Director of Music:** Scott Sims
- ☐ **Praise Band:** Scott Sims, Christina Hall,
Dave Dugwyler, Dan Wiebe, Bradley Wallace,
Marcie Donavon, Jennifer Dorsch, Frances
DeBruyn
- ☐ **Sunday School:** Kris Crow, Heidi Ruff
- ☐ **VBS Leader:** Kris Crow

CHURCH COUNCIL 2025

- ☐ **President:** Darnell Pettengill
- ☐ **Vice President:** Sue Boyd
- ☐ **Secretary:** Lisa Moehn
- ☐ **Treasurer:** Steve Umland
- ☐ **Members at Large:** James King, Jill
Wehr and Julie Anderson

SENIOR PASTOR MARK ROSSMAN'S REPORT***The Report of the Pastor******Annual Congregational Meeting—February 2026***

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. What a wonderful place . . . in the world it is in which we live. We have truly been blessed as people of God. In the 25 years that people have gathered in worship and praise of our Lord at Living Water Church, a great many things have taken place. In each and every one of these happenings God has been very present and visible in the life of Living Water Church.

This year we celebrate twenty-five years as a congregation. What began as a dream, financially supported by Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church of Minneapolis, has turned into a powerful example of faith in North Scottsdale. As we look back over these years gone by, more importantly, we look forward to the years ahead. Years where we see continued growth in what we offer to our neighbors both locally and around the world. As we Open the Doors to do More, we do so with the energy and commitment that has brought us to this place. It is through this door that we will discover that there is so much more for us to do, so many opportunities to serve our Lord in the name of Living Water Lutheran Church.

What an amazing year it has been. When someone—someone who looks a great deal like me—came up with the idea of doing something “special” to celebrate 25 years of ministry, they began to wonder if the audacious plan to payoff the mortgage was a good idea at all. Coming out of two surgeries and feeling a tad exhausted, I was wondering if I was asking too much of the congregation. In the end, you all proved me wrong. Oh, me of little faith.

God has blessed Living Water Church in ways which we may not wholly understand nor clearly see. What we do know is the blessing we have in the people here. We are unique in the level of care and compassion that exists here - compassion that continually rises above contention and strife, a compassion that reaches out to those in need. And with the success of the anniversary campaign, we have the ability to do so much more. We have been blessed with a creative and energetic following. The folks who have taken active leadership positions expend an unbelievable amount of time and energy creating and maintaining and expanding a ministry that serves all of God's people.

We have been especially blessed by God within controversy and strife. During times of greatest challenge, God's presence is never more strongly felt and the promises of God never more pertinent.

(Psalm 55:22) Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

Our history as a congregation has demonstrated time and time again, that even in the very worst of times, God's presence not only sustains the people of God, but greatly enriches the people, too.

What a glorious ministry . . . we have found in this place. While quite often individuals have equated ministry with work, I have found it to be not a burden, but rather another very real blessing. Ministry is God - at least in the manner in which by doing the work of ministry allows people to see the presence of God in their lives. Within ministry, what we find is the working of God's Holy Spirit. God's presence leading and guiding the work we do on God's behalf here in the northern Scottsdale area.

The task of ministry is something that we are called to do. Ministry is not something set aside for the man or woman who wears the funny collar or flowing dress on Sunday. Ministry is the work of God's people for God's creation. It is the task of every Christian to see that ministry is done, not just from a perspective of oversight, but in a very real and grounded way. We are called to do the work of the Lord in this time and place.

Being part of the body of Christ, being part of any congregation is not a matter of simply attending worship on a weekly basis. In being an active member of the body of Christ means that we are called to actively serve God in the areas of ministry that are set before each of us. Whether it be a call to teaching, to exceptional stewardship, to outreach, to a sharing ministry, to administration, to Word and Sacrament, to counseling, to areas of congregational service, to visitation, or any other aspect of ministry, we all have been called to serve God in a greater capacity than placing ourselves in a seat on Sunday. We have been called to something greater than to evaluate the work that everyone else accomplishes - we have been called into the service of our Lord - to do God's work - to live a life dedicated in a very visible and profound way to offer service and honor to the Lord of our lives.

What a perfect time . . . to be part of God's family. There has been no other time in history that it has been so right to do ministry. We live in a society that is more nonreligious than ever before. We live in the midst of a community where the unchurched vastly outnumber those who hold a church affiliation. But what there also exists is a great yearning for a greater sense of spirituality, a greater understanding and growth of the individuals' relationship with God. What a perfect time to be part of the

church. In the midst of this societal quest, we have the opportunity to reach more people than ever before. Our more fundamental brothers and sisters have begun to explore the vast richness of these struggling folks - we too, ought to be doing the same.

But there is a catch, of sorts. These folks are not part of organized religion because they see it as being very flawed. They look with a certain amount of disdain and skepticism at church professionals who wave the banner of the Gospel as folks who are out to get something for themselves. It is in the life of the committed, faithful follower that these un-churched individuals have a chance to better understand and see the benefits, blessings and joys that can be found in working with God's church on earth. But for us as a congregation to have the ability to reach out to these folks, we must have people who are willing to share the message of joy and hope that can be found at Living Water. We need to have folks who are willing to step out of their regular routine to talk and walk the story of faith with these searching souls. It is a perfect time, but the catch is that we need folks who are willing to go out and share what Living Water means to them - to share that message at work, to share that message at school, to share that message at the store or on the tennis or pickleball court, golf course or hiking trail. In doing so, then and only then, will individuals searching for a better way be able to answer the question of *"what will being a member of Living Water do for me?"*

It is a time to communicate . . . the message of the love of Christ to people inside and outside the walls of this congregation. It is time to communicate that love in the action of our lives - in that which we do and that which we say to others, and about others. Communication is the key.

But solid communication must go in a couple of different directions. First and foremost, we must communicate the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. As with most things, communication means a couple of different things. This includes communicating the Gospel in what we do, in what we say, in how we act, in how we treat others, and in how we make decisions concerning the world.

In our dealings with others in our church family, it is of vital importance that we communicate with one another. Nothing can be more damaging to the relationships we have with one another than talk that takes place concerning others. In organizations such as ours, talk that criticizes, puts down, or condemns the lives and actions of another can be quite destructive. When this occurs trust is destroyed, and the ability we have to work with one another is brought to ruin. We all must be keenly aware of what we say and how that talk can affect the feelings and lives of another. The people who volunteer their time do their utmost to produce fine programs, to see that the Lord's house is kept in good order and that the ministry groups of this congregation function on a very high level. But as with all things, nothing is perfect, including the work we do. But rather spend time and energy letting people know what was not accomplished in the work they did, would it not be more beneficial if we used that time and energy to assist individuals in the tasks they sent out to do? As members of the body of Christ we have been called to be the ones who build up the community, not tear it down. We all need to be aware of the power we hold in the words we share with others.

It is a time of challenge . . . as we look forward to 2026. The challenges before us are not simply financial in nature. The challenges that lie before us are ones facing all of

Christendom. In the midst of distrust, violence and hatred that have so violated our world, how do we continue to communicate and live the command of Christ to love? Love not just those around us but love those who are strangers in our lives and in our world.

As always, one of the challenges is budgetary. The decision of the Council is one that has been Spirit led. The Council at Living Water believes that God does not challenge individuals or organizations toward the unreachable. In fact, we believe that God does not set us to a task without first equipping us with that which we need to see the task accomplished, the goal met.

As we look back . . . over 2025 it is obvious that we can see how richly the Lord has blessed us as a congregation. 2025 saw a rise in new members and most importantly, as we celebrated our 25th anniversary, we showed our thanks to God by stepping forward and paying down our mortgage. Over the next few years, we can look forward to making that mortgage part of our past. We have also celebrated new people stepping in to coordinate areas of leadership within the life of Living Water.

But not everything is new. During the past year people who have long been working at a variety of tasks have continued their grace-filled work. The individuals who serve on our Ministry Teams continue to exhibit a high level of love and caring that has become a hallmark of the life of Living Water Church. And then there are the myriads of people who work behind the scenes to prepare us for our worship, pay the bills, keep things running, the facility up to date, and our worship space tastefully and beautifully decorated.

The promise of the future . . . has seldom been stronger than it is as we enter into 2026. There are a great many challenges that lie ahead, but with everyone working together, there is not a challenge that cannot be met. The Lord has greatly blessed each and every one of us simply in allowing us to be part of His family here at Living Water Church. As we move further into 2026, let us show our gratitude by making this a banner year for Living Water Church. Let us proclaim 2026 as the year of the Lord—a year where we celebrate the next 25 years of ministry together. Blessings to one and all.

Mark A. Rossman
Pastor - Living Water Church



PASTOR SHARI BERNAU'S REPORT

2025 was an unforgettable year for Living Water Lutheran Church and I feel so blessed to be part of this community and the difference we are making in the name of Christ. The 25th Anniversary and the "Open the Doors, Do More" Campaign were huge highs, and hopefully we can all look back at these events not as peaks on a curve that leveled out or dipped into valleys, but rather as launching points in our expansion of reaching more people and making an even bigger difference in this community and world. Of course, this is going to take the whole team (our whole congregation) working together, but I know we can do it!

Connecting with young families in the community

Annual Events for Moms in the Community
We hosted "Restore: Soul Care for Moms" again this year on Friday, November 14, and there were 25 moms and 5 kids. We had 7 volunteers from Living Water that provided

the very best hospitality for the moms and childcare for the kids.

Providing Faith Formation and Pastoral Leadership for Children, Youth, and Families

Nursery

The nursery has been used by our families who have kids who are a little too young for Family Sunday School, so they are very grateful for it. Also, we are happy to keep it open if families need it during worship as well. However, statistics show that children who attend worship with regularity are more likely to stay connected to a faith community in their adulthood. Therefore, it's important that we are open and welcoming to young children (and their parents who are trying their best) who are learning and growing in their experience of worship.

Milestone events

These events help us to stay faithful to the baptismal promises we make as we walk alongside the children of our faith family and celebrate the milestones of their faith journey. The following milestones we have celebrated this year include Graduation, Back-to-School blessing, and Confirmation.

Children's Ministry

Kris Crow, Ellen Schoenbeck and myself currently facilitate the Family Sunday School program. We also give thanks for Heidi Ruff who fills in for one of us when we are absent. It was a big transition when we lost Pam Landon, and we are still grieving her loss, but we realize we must press on and honor her memory by providing fun and engaging ways to share God's love with children.

Youth Ministry

In June, there were seven of us from Living Water who went on a Mission Trip to Lake Traverse Reservation in South Dakota. Youthworks Mission Trips provided yet another great experience for all of us to learn more about the culture, meet people in the community and serve with partner organizations that are making a difference in the lives of those in need. Every time I go on one of these mission trips, I feel as though my eyes are opened to more and more of the ways God is working in the world.

A big thanks to Kris Crow and Julie Ann Walker who have provided leadership in the fundraisers for youth trips, and to all of you in the congregation who attend our fundraisers and show your support for our youth in a variety of ways. The two main fundraisers for 2025 were the Gourmet Valentine's Breakfast and Moonlight and Music, and over \$3500 was raised.

Confirmation

2025 was another good year for Confirmation, and I am so thankful for Julie Ann Walker who is a great partner in this ministry. We have designed the program to make sure that the students feel special, have fun, have thoughtful discussions, and learn in a variety of ways. On November 9, three students completed the program, and affirmed their baptisms in the Rite of Confirmation. We currently have five students in the class.

Provide Ministry of Word and Sacrament, Pastoral Care, and support the ministries and volunteers in the congregation:

I have the opportunity to lead worship every Sunday and either preside at communion or preach. I also have the pleasure of making visits and phone calls and attending the Tuesday Women's Study to learn and connect with the women in the congregation. I also oversee the Eucharistic Ministry, Grief Support

Ministry, serve as liaison to the Northeast Valley Consortium, as well as attend many of our fellowship events throughout the year.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pastor Shari L. Bernau



COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Darnell Pettengill

Grace and Peace to you in the name of our Lord & our Savior Jesus Christ!

A year of recovery, celebration and growth in faith and service. That's what comes to mind when I think of the life of Living Water in 2025.

We are all so very thankful for: successful surgeries for Pastor Mark and Pastor Shari and for the many other healings that occurred: for new members who are engaging in the life of the congregation and for births and baptisms as evidence that God's family is growing. Yet, we were also saddened at the loss of multiple members who so embodied a life of service and generosity.

So many of our existing programs and activities are flourishing. Angel Tree, ELCA Good Gifts, Vacation Bible School, Men's & Women's Bible Studies, Adult Ed, and Saints & Sinners, just to name a few. Thanks to all who fill the volunteer roles in leading our programs and ministry efforts.

Last year also saw the creation of new programs and initiatives. The Grief Support Ministry lead by Diane Klumpp was so well received that a second session is scheduled for Spring. Council created a Legacy Gifting Program designed to benefit ministries of the church especially the Endowment Fund. In 2026, Council will pursue ideas that were generated from those attending the Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon.

Two events stand out in making 2025 a special year in the life of the congregation. First, many thanks to those who coordinated and spoke at our 25th Anniversary dinner. We not only celebrated the past and paid homage to those who established Living Water, but we also that night announced a capital campaign designed to eliminate the mortgage and use those

savings to expand existing and new ministries. Second, that capital campaign, Open Doors Do More, saw so many give of their time and treasures to support the dream that we far exceeded our goal and have already made a significant payment on the mortgage and have included those savings in the ministry budget for 2026!

In 2026, Council will focus on expanding existing ministries and creating new ones based on input from the congregation.

In closing, it has been rewarding to serve with Pastors Mark and Shari and Council members who are compassionate, caring, faith driven servants. Thank you all for your leadership at Living Water! On behalf of Council, we look forward in 2026 to continuing to fulfill Living Water's vision of "To create a community which Welcomes all people; Shares the experience of God's grace; Grows in faith, and is Sent Out into the world to care."

Darnell Pettengill
Council President



MISSION GROUPS AND MINISTRY TEAMS



Caring – Mission Program Leader: Debbie Anderson and Susan Umland

- Letter Writing Ministry
- Prayer Team
- Heat Respite Lunch Pack Program
- God's Work. Our Hands.
- Prayer Shawl Ministry



Service – Mission Program Leader: Debbie Anderson and Sue Umland

- ☐ "A Better Chance" Diaper Closet
- ☐ Angel Tree (NourishPhx)
- ☐ Arizona Tax Credit—Habitat for Humanity
- ☐ Arizona Tax Credit—Navajo Evangelical Lutheran Mission School
- ☐ ELCA Good Gifts
- ☐ ELCA World Hunger
- ☐ Foothills Foodbank
- ☐ God's Work. Our Hands.
- ☐ Grace Lutheran Church—Homeless Project/Grace Room
- ☐ Habitat for Humanity
- ☐ Heat Respite Lunch Pack Program
- ☐ Hunger Jar
- ☐ La Sagrada Familia Lutheran Church—Food Pantry
- ☐ La Sagrada Familia Lutheran Church—Medical Equipment Lending
- ☐ Library
- ☐ La Sagrada Familia Lutheran Church—Tamale Sale

- ☐ Lunches for Learning
- ☐ Lutheran Disaster Response (ELCA)
- ☐ Lutheran World Relief (LWR)
 - Piecemakers
 - Quilting—Personal Care Kits
- ☐ LWLC Book Drive (Assistance League Phx)
- ☐ NE Valley Consortium
 - Prayer Shawl Ministry
- ☐ Souper Bowl of Caring
- ☐ Thanksgiving Food Drive (Vista del Camino)



Learning - Mission Program Leader: Pastor Shari Bernau

- ☐ Children's Faith Formation – Family Sunday School
- ☐ Confirmation
- ☐ Living Water Library
- ☐ LWLCW – Living Water Lutheran Church Women
- ☐ Men's Breakfast Bible Study
- ☐ Sunday Morning Adult Forum
- ☐ Tuesday Women's Bible Study
- ☐ Vacation Bible School
- ☐ Youth Ministry



Fellowship - Mission Program Leader:
Ellen Schoenbeck

- ☐ Campus Crew
- ☐ Friday Morning Club
- ☐ Great Gatherings
- ☐ Lefse Making
- ☐ Living Art
- ☐ Saints and Sinners
- ☐ Splendid Table
- ☐ Sunday Morning Hospitality



Worship and Music – Mission Program Leader: Pastor Mark Rossman

- ☐ Altar Guild
- ☐ Choir
- ☐ Liturgical Arts
- ☐ Praise Band
- ☐ Prayer Partners
- ☐ Servant Teams
- ☐ Special Services
- ☐ Technical Services
- ☐ Worship and Music



Witness - Mission Program Leader:
Pastor Mark Rossman

- ☐ Bike Riders Welcome
- ☐ New Member Class
- ☐ Pro-active Community Engagement (PACE)
- ☐ Website & Social Media



Giving - Mission Program Leader:
Pastor Mark Rossman

- ☐ Annual Stewardship Campaign
- ☐ Building Fund
- ☐ Capital Campaign
- ☐ Endowment Giving
- ☐ General Fund
- ☐ Gifts of Appreciated Stock
- ☐ Special Gifts/Memorials

MUTUAL MINISTRY TEAM**Sharon Augenstein**

We are blessed at Living Water Lutheran Church to have the leadership and support of our Pastors and Church Council for a Mutual Ministry Team.

Mutual Ministry Teams or Committees are rooted in the ELCA Model Constitution and the governing documents of Living Water. In 2023 the Council initiated a five-member Mutual Ministry Team at Living Water. The current five-member team consists of two at large members who were appointed by the Council, one member selected by each Pastor and one member selected by the music director and associate director. The structure and purpose of the committee is stated in the Living Water governing documents as follows:

Mutual Ministry Committee

This Committee functions as staff support and serves as a confidential sounding board with whom the staff, both clergy and lay, can share concerns and ideas in such issues as inter-staff problem resolution, pastoral and staff compensation, etc. It should assist the pastor(s) and staff members in the evaluation of their ministry as well as assisting the congregation in the evaluation of its ministry. The Committee shall consist of at least five members of the congregation whose terms of membership shall be two years: two members nominated by the Congregation Council, one member nominated by each pastor and deacon, and one member nominated by the lay staff, and all are appointed by the Congregation Council President. Committee members will hold no other office in the congregation during their term.

Let a team member know if you have questions or would like more information. You

are always welcome to contact any member with your ideas or concerns. Team members serve with confidentiality of information and input.

Current Mutual Ministry Team Members:

Sharon Augenstein, facilitator and Member-at-large

Nancy Philabaum, recorder of minutes and member-at-large

Carol Jacobson, Pastor Mark appointee
Debbie Anderson, Pastor Shari appointee
Joan Sprinkle, Music Director and Assistant Director appointee

**CARING MISSION GROUP—Sue Umland**

The Caring Mission group provides spiritual, prayer, and emotional support to members of Living Water Lutheran Church and their families and friends during times of need and times of celebration. Leadership is now shared among the team.

LETTER WRITING MINISTRY—Lou Handley

The note/card writing ministry sends get well, encouragement and sympathy cards/notes to those on the weekly prayer list. The cards are "From Your Friends At Living Water Lutheran Church." This assures the recipients that the congregation is praying for them.

Throughout 2025, 107 cards were written and sent by Sally Harris, Donna Pettengill, Julie Anderson, Mary Nyberg and Lou Handley.

Lou Handley took over the leadership in 2025.

PRAYER TEAM—Tuesday Women's Bible Study

In 2021, the Prayer Chain Ministry converted to a Prayer Team and incorporated the prayer

ministry of the Tuesday Women's Study. Prayers are offered in support for members and friends of Living Water whose concerns were brought to our attention. Prayer requests may be made by calling the office (480-473-8400), completing a prayer request form in the narthex, or emailing prayer@lwlcaz.org



SERVICE MISSION GROUP—Sue Umland

The Service Mission group leads a variety of projects providing gifts and support to people within Living Water, in our local communities, and throughout the world. These projects allow involvement from across the congregation in hands-on as well as financial support, including inter-generational projects. We are grateful for the passion and service of those who served as team leaders during 2025, including Debbie Anderson, Deb Bash, Sue and Eric Brash, Denny Dumler, Jay Lucas, Steve and Beth McCarthy, Lisa Moehn, John and Judy Nerison, Ron and Cindy Ophaug, Kathie Schroedel, Myrna Ulland, Sue Umland, Darryl and Diane Van Maanen and Doris Yock. With the formation of the Northeast Valley Consortium (NEVC) of five neighboring ELCA churches in 2021, we continue to work together in several social ministry areas. Our partnership with LSS-SW remains strong. In 2025, through our mission projects, members of Living Water provided generous support in the form of donated goods and financial resources outside of their annual support to the church. You can find additional details of our many ministry projects in the reports that follow.

"A BETTER CHANCE" DIAPER CLOSET—Debbie Anderson and Sue Umland

The Spring 2025 drive to collect money for the

Alleluia Better Chance Diaper Closet brought in \$2,260! This opportunity for Living Water to help ease the cost of diapers and wipes makes a huge difference for those experiencing severely limited budgets. Many thanks for the generous donations!

ANGEL TREE—Jay Lucas

The Angel Tree is a traditional inspirational part of the LWLC Christmas season. Our congregation continues to demonstrate its Christian beliefs by living the life of giving and caring Christians. A large change in the Angel Tree program occurred this year, necessitated by funding and resulting staff cuts at Nourish Phoenix. But we were able to adapt. This year we made 100 Phoenix inner-city children (ages 3-13) happier at Christmas via the wonderful gifts our congregation purchased for them. In addition, twenty of our handcrafted angels adorned the Nourish Phoenix Christmas tree and then ended up finding a home on twenty Nourish Phoenix recipients' Christmas trees. We plan to increase that to 100 angels next Christmas.

The angels were designed and decorated by Leila and Wayne Burris. Ron Ophaug, Gerry Cales and I carefully cut out and released the angels from a few boards of wood. Wayne and Leila Burrus artistically hung the angels on our church Angel tree. Janis Fjeld again solved the complicated logistics of matching gifts with recipient kids. The bagging team led by Bob Frost, assembled all the gifts, attached Living Water Christmas greeting labels, and shipped them off to Nourish Phoenix. Thanks to Jennifer Kelsh in our church office and to Terry Nelson for their publicity and communications work.

In addition, our congregation donated \$150 cash to Nourish Phoenix. We are so fortunate to have Nourish Phoenix providing a year-round food/clothing bank as well as job and

personal counseling to hundreds of inner-city families in need of assistance. Nourish Phoenix and their clients have been most appreciative of LWLC gifts and view us as one of their pillars of giving at Christmas. We not only made over 120 of their clients very happy, but we once again brought excitement and encouragement to the Nourish Phoenix staff.

Way to Go LWLC!

Thank you all for being Angels!

ARIZONA TAX CREDIT—

Ron Ophaug

Arizona permits taxpayers to claim multiple credits for contributions to charitable organizations and schools. Habitat for Humanity is one of these qualifying organizations. If donors designate their money to the NE Lutheran Coalition/Living Water Lutheran Church, this money is credited to our church and any home building we do with Habitat. By donating you can directly reduce your AZ state tax liability. For individuals, married couples filing separately, or single heads of households, the maximum Arizona State Tax Credit in 2025 is \$495. For married filing jointly there is a maximum Arizona State Tax Credit in 2025 of \$987. This means you can donate, and you will receive a dollar-for-dollar reduction in your AZ state income tax up to the maximum allowed.

AZ TAX CREDIT - NAVAJO EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN MISSION CHRISTIAN SCHOOL—

Denny Dumler

Here is another AZ tax credit opportunity. This is through the Arizona Christian School Tuition Organization (ACSTO). One of the schools helped by this tax credit is the Navajo Evangelical Lutheran Mission Christian School in Rock Point. This school needs financial help, and the AZ tax credit is an opportunity for support. Here, you donate

right to ACSTO and specifically designate the Navajo Evangelical Lutheran Mission Christian school. In 2025 Donors can give up to \$1,535/\$769 (married/single) towards the original tax credit. Any donation above this amount will then go towards the Overflow Tax Credit, up to a maximum of an additional \$1,527/\$766. It is clearly explained at the ACSTO website, <https://acsto.org/>. They walk you through the donation process right on the website. The website also provides the tax reporting instructions and documents needed if you participate in this unique tax credit opportunity. Also, note that donations can be made in early 2025 up to the April tax deadline.

ASYLUM—SEEKERS NEEDS

We coordinate the Asylum-Seekers program through LSS-SW and continue to accept new clothing and snacks for those seeking permanent residency in the U.S. and who are traveling through the Phoenix area. Thank you for all the donations to our box located in the narthex entry.

ELCA GOOD GIFTS—Cindy and Ron Ophaug

The ELCA Good Gifts program is a wonderful way to donate and share gifts with people in need. LWLC had another good year in donations! LWLC members gave over \$4,000, with several members doubling their donations. Great job donating LWLC!!! The Good Gifts program encourages members and friends to give and receive gifts throughout the year. Gifts include family farm, computer for learning center, goats, chickens, roosters, honeybees, fruit tree seedlings, vaccinations for a child, school fees for a girl, school supplies for a child, water jugs and many other items. For more ideas, check <https://goodgifts.elca.org>. Living Water has been very generous over the years with their gifts, and we hope that support lasts for the coming year. Thank you to all who donated and supported this program.

ELCA WORLD HUNGER—Living Water Congregation

Living Water's support for ELCA World Hunger is lifted up each year during the 40 days of Lent. In 2025, we supported ELCA World Hunger through our Hunger Jar initiative (please see that report) I and the 40-40-40 Challenge during Lent. You are invited to join the 40-40-40 Challenge during Lent 2026. Watch for details in the Connections!

FOOTHILLS FOODBANK—Deb Bash

LWLC supported the mission of Foothills Food Bank —"Fighting Hunger. Feeding Hope.". Donations from the *Change for Change* jar as well as food donations throughout the year are collected for the foodbank. Foothills Foodbank also supported the Heat Respite sack lunches during the summer by providing the chips and snacks that were added to the 500+ lunches made by LWLC, as well as the additional 3,000 meals from the other churches in the Northeast Valley Consortium. The new building for Foothills Food Bank opened June 1, 2025, with over 7,000 square feet of warehouse storage. The foodbank saw a 23% increase in client volume after opening due to visibility and need. A total of 36,192 households were served with 1,206 new families added (a 41% increase since 2024). The Foodbank distributed 1.7 million meals in 2025, and collected over 2 millions pounds of food.

41% of families visited one of the locations (Cave Creek, Black Canyon City and New River) one to three times for emergency food during a difficult time

20% of families or individuals came to the foodbank between 4-9 times while they got back in their feet

12% needed short-term help, up to 18 visits, after a crisis, such as a job loss or unexpected medical expenses

27% rely on ongoing support (twice a month) due to long term needs, fixed income and rising costs, medical issues, mental health challenges , or ongoing family challenges.

GOD'S WORK. OUR HANDS. — Debbie Anderson; Darryl and Debbie vanMaanen; and Susan Umland

THANK YOU to everyone who contributed time, money, and supplies for making God's Work, Our Hands on September 7 a big success! Your generosity and effort filled 100 personal care kits to help make life a little bit easier for the homeless. We delivered the kits, along with a big box of overflow items, on Monday, September 8, to a church in Tempe that serves as a respite center. The Arizona Faith Network provided both the ideas for the care kit items and the destination. Based on the warm welcome and genuine appreciation we received, we know that we made a difference. With your generous support, we can do more of these projects!

A special thank you to Myrna Ulland for securing a Thrivent grant of \$250.00 and to Darryl and Diane VanMaanen for their skill and effort in organizing and supervising the packing of the kits.

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH HOMELESS PROJECT/GRACE ROOM—

Steve and Beth McCarthy

Donations of clean, usable clothing, shoes, new socks and underwear, for an adult population, and toiletry supplies (think travel size) help supply the Grace Room at Grace Lutheran. Steve and Beth McCarthy make routine deliveries to the Grace Room on behalf of Living Water.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY—**Ron Ophaug**

Living Water Lutheran Church has completed 19 houses as part of Habitat for Humanity. We will be looking to help with a build this spring. Habitat for Humanity has built over 1,300 homes, completed more than 4,500 repairs, and improved living conditions for more than 5,000 to 6,000 Arizona families, all thanks to the generosity of donors and volunteers like LWLC. Consider donating through the AZ Tax Credit or volunteering.

HEAT RESPITE LUNCH PACK PROGRAM—**Deb Bash**

Living Water provided lunches on both July 8th and August 26th for the Heat Respite Program for the homeless at Grace Lutheran downtown. Our church was part of the five churches in the Northeast Valley Consortium that provided 10 lunches throughout the summer. Lunches include ham and cheese sandwiches, mustard/mayo/relish, packet, granola bar, fresh veggies, chips, and napkin as well as water. The funds for these lunches were provided by Ascension Lutheran Church and split between the 5 churches. Foothill Food Bank delivered many of the items and Spirit in the Desert also donated time slicing the ham. Thanks to the 14 volunteers in July and 12 volunteers in August who took time out of their Monday morning to put these lunch bags together. 300 bags were packed in July and 250 in August. Three carloads of lunches were delivered to the program. In total 3,000 lunches were served over the entire summer program.

HUNGER JAR—**LWLC Congregation/Ministry Team**

The Hunger Jar includes offerings of coins, bills, and checks dropped into the Hunger Jar in the sanctuary during worship services, as well as gifts given through online donations or

designated gifts. These offerings are a source of significant funds for support to local and international organizations addressing hunger issues. 2025 continued to be a wonderful year of giving to the Hunger Jar; thank you LWLC! Our goal is to designate 50% to local hunger initiatives and 50% to global when we can. In the first half of the year, we collected \$1,870. Instead of sending to just one organization we split our collections between St Mary's Food Bank of Arizona, Nourish PHX and Foothills Food Bank for the local component. Each received \$312. The Global portion was split between ELCA World Hunger and Feed My Starving Children. They each received \$467. We collected \$2,042 in the second half of the year. In January we will be distributing these collections to Foothills Food Bank and ELCA World Hunger. They will receive \$1,021 each. Thank you so much for your generosity that makes such a difference in people's lives!

LA SAGRADA FAMILIA LUTHERAN CHURCH FOOD PANTRY—LWLC Congregation /John and Judy Nerison

Members of Living Water continue to donate non-perishable food items for the food pantry maintained by La Sagrada Familia for people in need among those served by that congregation. Living Water individuals have volunteered to monitor the cart and make regular deliveries of food items collected weekly in our grocery cart. A list of items in need by La Sagrada can be found in the folder in the grocery cart.

LA SAGRADA FAMILIA LUTHERAN CHURCH MEDICAL LENDING LIBRARY—**Steve McCarthy**

An ongoing ministry provides donated durable medical equipment to La Sagrada familia church, allowing them to lend out the equipment to those in need who have no insurance coverage for items. Durable medical equipment includes crutches, canes, commodes, wheelchairs/cushions, walkers,

hospital beds, recliners, etc. We had a successful drive in 2025 and also facilitated the donation of a handicapped van from a friend of a congregant. We anticipate another collection drive in 2026.

LA SAGRADA FAMILIA LUTHERAN CHURCH TAMALE SALE—Doris Yock

Every year in late December, members of La Sagrada Familia Lutheran Church gather for a very long day to make hundreds of tamales, assembling, steaming, and packaging them. As part of an important fundraiser for La Sagrada, they offer tamales for sale to our congregation. This year, orders were taken at Living Water after the service on Sundays in December, and the tamales were available for pickup on the Sunday before Christmas. Three choices were offered – green chili chicken, red chili pork, and cheese with green chili – for \$34 per dozen and \$17 per half-dozen. Members of Living Water purchased 33½ dozen tamales. The sale proceeds, including donations from people who rounded up the cost of their purchases, amounted to \$1,164. We're grateful for this shared Christmas tradition and for members of Living Water who support the La Sagrada congregation in this way.

LUNCHES FOR LEARNING—Denny Dumler

For the past nine years, LWLC has sponsored two schools in rural Honduras for children and their families in the elementary school years that work to reverse the cycle of poverty that has existed for many years. With many families living on less than \$2 per day, children have been forced to beg for food for their families, suffered with malnutrition with lack of food, and forced to drop out of school without a basic education. The program has been in existence since 2005 and now serves 46 schools in the Valle Region of Honduras. During this time, dropouts have been reduced to nearly zero and steps toward reversing the cycle of poverty have occurred. Like the rest of the world, COVID-19 forced the schools and

the food deliveries to be halted, and the country experienced two major hurricanes in 2021 that have further had major negative impacts on the children of the region. The school year is from February through November, and the schools have now reopened and are again in full session. It will be a significant effort to regain the success we have experienced in the past, but it is clear the need is greater than ever. We have funded our support for the two schools with gifts from members and friends and through a portion of the offerings during the Lenten season. In 2025 we sent \$3,167 to Lunches for Learning.

LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE— LWLC Congregation/Ministry Team

Periodically, Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), a ministry of the ELCA, is lifted up when tornadoes, fires, floods, hurricanes, and other disasters occur in the U.S or globally. Church members may support LDS through designated gifts to Living Water or give directly through online giving. In 2025, Living Water sent \$1,460 to Lutheran Disaster Response

LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF (LWR) QUILT AND KIT MINISTRY—Myrna Ulland

Piecemakers Quilting: In 2025, we continued our quilting activity to make quilts for Lutheran World Relief (LWR) and for high school graduates from Living Water. 92 quilts were displayed and blessed in October and sent on their way at the AZ LWR ingathering in Phoenix. Generous donations to support shipping of the quilts (and kits) was accomplished with an envelope pinned to each quilt. Thank you, LWLC congregation! We also made five quilts for LWLC high school graduates. In December we distributed 11 quilts to a new ministry in Phoenix, Sleep in Heavenly Peace (SHP). SHP makes bunk beds for children who have no beds and provides a mattress and bedding along with each bed. We are grateful

for designated quilt and fabric storage space in the Education Building (in the “Martha” classroom). Information on this ministry is available from LWR’s website: <https://lwr.org/quilts-and-kits>.

Personal Care Kits:

The kits give hope to those who have lost everything through two bars of hand soap, a small bath towel, a toothbrush, comb, and nail clippers. We initiated this annual project at the beginning of Lent 2025 and were able to use a \$250 Thrivent Action Team gift card to supplement in-kind gifts from the congregation along with direct cash gifts. A total of 122 Personal Care Kits were assembled by our Confirmation students. These kits were delivered in October 2025 to a LWR AZ Ingathering of kits and quilts. We plan to repeat this project during Lent 2026.

LWLC BOOK DRIVE—Sue Brash

LWLC BOOK DRIVE – Sue Brash
Living Water conducts an ongoing collection of new and gently used books for babies through adults. These collections are then distributed throughout the Phoenix area by Delivering Dreams of Arizona (formerly Assistance League of Phoenix.) Many of these books are chosen by Title I schools’ K-8 students. NourishPHX, UMOM New Day Centers’ chapel, PPHX Homeless Outreach (2 locations), St. Vincent de Paul clinic, and Westside Head Start (20 sites), clients also receive appropriate children’s and adult reading materials. Please remember we collect used magazines (especially with recipes), which are appreciated by adults striving to become bilingual. The UMOM interdenominational chapel gratefully distributes our donated religious titles to homeless families. In 2025, our congregation (with tremendous summer support by our Vacation Bible School attendees) gathered

4,649 well-received books! Since starting this project, LWLC has provided 30,785 books. We encourage you to please solicit book and magazine donations from family, friends, and neighbors. A collection basket is always available in the narthex. You can contact Sue Brash with any questions or to arrange a large pick-up: suebrash7@gmail.com or 602-317-9444.

NE VALLEY CONSORTIUM—Pastor Shari



The NE Valley Consortium (NEVC) includes five ELCA churches in our NE Valley Conference: Living Water and New Covenant in Scottsdale,

Christ the Lord in Carefree, New Journey in Fountain Hills, and Ascension in Paradise Valley. Pastors and lay representatives from the five churches meet regularly to plan and promote activities that connect members of the congregation with shared education and ministry opportunities.

NEVC joined Living Water for our VBS book drive and there was a total of 4,649 books donated. This is our largest number of books ever! The Consortium also participated in the Heat Respite lunch packing program. We were able to alleviate the devastating effects of the heat on many people who are homeless. Thanks to the leadership of Deb Bash and many volunteers, together, as a Consortium, we were able to complete 16 lunch pack events, which are equivalent to over 3,000 lunches. Also, the Consortium worked together to provide a Maundy Thursday worship service at Spirit in the Desert Retreat Center, a Water Walk, and worked together on the 40-40-40 Lenten Challenge. We look forward to working together on many new adventures to make a difference in our world.

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY—Kathie Schroedel

In 2025 the Prayer Shawl Ministry had 17 members. We continue to knit or crochet

prayer shawls. Prior to Lent our group made many prayer squares to be available during Lent to take for members/guests. We encouraged people to take one to pass on to someone who could benefit from receiving one. Pastor Shari wrote a prayer to be included with each square. They continue to be requested by members. Since our supply was depleted, the group has been asked to replenish and put in baskets to be available soon. We are brainstorming ideas for knitting or crocheted items that could be donated.

We currently have 22 prayer shawls and 10 baby blankets available. We now have 38 prayer squares and continue to make more.

Submitted by Kathie Schroedel

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM (LSS-SW)—

Living Water's participation in refugee resettlement through Lutheran Social Services has paused due to lack of activity with resettlement. In the meantime, Keith Hainey at Christ the Lord in Carefree continues to collect donations e.g., furniture, household goods, for future efforts to set up homes for refugees. Please contact Christ the Lord if you have items to pass along.

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING— Congregation/LWLC Youth

Each February, a special offering is solicited to support the Souper Bowl of Caring (on Super Bowl Sunday), seeking gifts recognizing one of the two football teams in the big game, or to the "I don't really care" option! This event was founded in 1990 as a national campaign with the goal of alleviating hunger and poverty. The youth of LWLC determine the organization to receive the funds. In 2025, \$588 was raised.

THANKSGIVING FOOD DRIVE (Vista del Camino)—

Chairperson: Lisa Moehn

Living Water's participation in the annual Thanksgiving Meal Program sponsored by the Vista del Camino Food Bank is one way we fight hunger on the local level. This year the food bank requested cash donations instead of Thanksgiving dinner supplies and gift cards for turkeys. The food bank does bulk purchasing, making each dollar more impactful. Additionally, purchasing, bringing heavy bags to church, and then delivering them to Vista del Camino is cumbersome for our congregation. Our community responded by raising \$2,550 for dinner supplies. These meals were distributed to members of the Scottsdale community who are families or seniors in need, or otherwise experiencing crisis.



LEARNING MISSION GROUP-Mark Rossman

This team creates opportunities for learning for adults and children.

CHILDREN'S FAITH FORMATION: FAMILY SUNDAY SCHOOL—

Kris Crow, Heidi Ruff, Ellen Schoenbeck and Pr. Shari Bernau saw a Consistent attendance in 2025, and we love welcoming families of kids ages 4 through 5th grade two Sundays a month. We continue to use curriculum offered by Group Publishing entitled "Simply Loved - Where Kids Experience God's Greatest Gift." The curriculum focuses on helping kids discover the joy of a friendship with Jesus. The content includes a focus on the Bible story combined with great music videos and activities. In addition to classes, we have a

Lenten Fair in the spring, and an Advent Fair in the fall.

CONFIRMATION—Pastor Shari Bernau

Confirmation is a two-year program that provides an instruction/experience in the Christian faith in the Lutheran Church. This serves as part of the fulfillment of the promises made by parents and sponsors on the day of baptism. At the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year, we had 5 confirmation students attending classes. On November 10, 3 students affirmed their baptism.

LIVING WATER LIBRARY—Pastor Mark

An opportunity exists for someone who has a love for library ministry and what it might look like in the future here at Living Water to step into this leadership role! It can be an individual or shared ministry. Please contact Mark if you have an interest.

LWLCW – LIVING WATER LUTHERAN CHURCH WOMEN (AKA WELCA) — Myrna Ulland

Our Women of the ELCA unit at Living Water is known as LWLCW – Living Water Lutheran Church Women. We continue to be an active Women of the ELCA unit and we represent the women's ministry arm of our ELCA under a broad umbrella. We commit to the purpose of Women of the ELCA: As a community of women, created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world. At Living Water, many women are participants in ministries and mission teams and projects, and that is a good fit for our congregation. You'll see women supporting funeral receptions, involved in Bible study, quilting ministry, fellowship teams, prayer

shawls, writing ministry, liturgical arts, and even advocacy. While we have a rather informal organizational structure, we gather to grow in faith and live our faith through ministry and action. There's a place for all women at Living Water in the mission and ministries of Women of the ELCA. The leaders of our Women of the ELCA are Cindy Ophaug and Lynda Cales. Myrna Ulland, as churchwide president of the executive board of Women of the ELCA, continues to provide support as well.

In 2025, we continued to incorporate the Bible study from Gather magazine into the Tuesday Women's Study weekly rotation. Gather is the print publication of Women of the ELCA available by subscription. We routinely share information about resources and information from our churchwide Women of the ELCA, including the free monthly online magazine, Café from Women of the ELCA, designated for women in their 20s and 30s but used by women of all ages. Any woman can receive Café by signing up at www.boldcafe.org. In November, women from Living Water again supported an annual Thankoffering with a generous gift in response to the blessings we've enjoyed. The offering supports ministries of Women of the ELCA across our entire churchwide organization. A 25% portion of our LWLCW offerings is routinely directed on to our Grand Canyon Synod women's organization to support the work of our broader women's organization. The remainder of our offering supports ministries supporting women and children.

We continue to be alert to new opportunities to engage and support women of all ages in their faith journey.

MEN'S BREAKFAST BIBLE STUDY—Pastor Mark Rossman

The Men's Breakfast Bible Study meets at 8:00 AM on Thursday of each week at Spirit

in the Desert. Each meeting averages 15+ attendees focused on reflecting and studying the lessons for the upcoming Sunday. This gathering has been blessed with the presence of men from other congregations actively participating in the discussion.

In December, the men again helped make Christmas special for seniors from Scottsdale's Via Linda Senior Center adopt-a-senior holiday program with a generous financial contribution.

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT FORUM

The Sunday morning Adult Forum once again resumed on a bi-monthly schedule beginning in September, with presentations from retired ELCA pastor, Rev. Dr. Dennis Nelson, Rev. Bob Hutson and other invited guests.

TUESDAY WOMEN'S STUDY—Myrna Ulland

The Tuesday Women's Study continues in a weekly morning meeting format. We have a committed group of women attending, with participation varying from 12-16+ each week. The study topics vary, from video-based series to book study to the periodic Bible study from Gather magazine. Tuesday Women's Study is open to all women, members and non-members, and prior experience with Bible study is not required. Come and learn with us!

We grow in our knowledge of scripture and in friendship and support with the depth of the prayers and conversation that occur each week. In 2025 we began the year continuing our deep dive into the Gospel of Matthew, using material from New Testament Scholar, N.T. Wight. That study ended after 30-some sessions in October. We finished out the year using material from the Gather magazine Bible study: Money, Stewardship and Generosity, and an Advent Devotion in

December. In addition to studying together, we continue to encourage support of various local and global ministries through our weekly offerings, highlighting hunger prevention and support for women and children. This year we supported the Alleluia Better Chance Diaper Closet, Foothills Food Bank, Peter's Hope, St. Mary's Food Bank, Sleep in Heavenly Peace, and the Native American Urban Ministry in Phoenix. In December, we again helped make thanksgiving and Christmas special for six adult women from Scottsdale's Grant Reef Senior Center adopt-a-senior holiday program. These gifts are in addition to the 25% we routinely direct to the Grand Canyon Synod's women's organization. Finally, the Tuesday Women's Bible study is the core prayer group for Living Water. We regularly lift up the prayers offered during the weekly worship service as well as those brought forward by our women when we meet together. It's a joy to be among the Tuesday Women who so lovingly share their wisdom, their laughter, their tears, their generosity and their hearts with one another as we learn together.

2025 VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL—Kris Crow

Our 2025 VBS program, entitled "Egypt - Joseph's Journey from Prison to Palace", was held the week of June 16. With over 45 youth and adult volunteers and 21 children from our church and community, we spent a week living the Bible stories through great music, meaningful Bible stories, fun and games, awesome crafts and a delicious take-home snack. Registration was free and each child and volunteer received a one-of-a-kind t-shirt.

Our daily Bible Points provided a great framework for exploring the story of Joseph from the book of Genesis.

Monday - **Jesus gives us hope**

Tuesday - **God gives us special abilities**

Wednesday - **God gives us wisdom**

Thursday - **God gives us forgiveness**

Friday - God gives us a family

The week ended with our annual VBS Festival featuring a BBQ lunch for our VBS families and volunteers and fun in the sun on a giant water slide in the courtyard. Our annual VBS book drive resulted in a record breaking donation of 4,649 books provided to Delivering Dreams of Arizona for distribution to children living in poverty.

A special thank you to Thrivent for three Actions grants. Two of the grants were used to offset the expenses in the Snack Shack and for VBS supplies. The third was used to purchase books for the book drive. Combined with the very generous contributions made by our congregation, our week of VBS was staged without using church funds.

A very special thank you to the VBS Leadership Team of Pastor Shari, Heidi Ruff, Myrna Ulland and Julie Ann Walker. Their creativity, passion and willingness to help with anything, made my job as the leader so much easier.

I close my final VBS report with a thank you to the pastors, volunteers and congregation of Living Water. Leading VBS has been a joy for nearly two decades. VBS is a unique opportunity for every generation to participate in learning, fellowship and service. While our primary purpose is planting the seeds of faith in our youngest participants, I have heard over and over that the rewards to everyone involved are substantial.

Thank you!
Kris Crow

**FELLOWSHIP MISSION GROUP—****Ellen Schoenbeck**

The Fellowship Program's objective is to strengthen fellowship among congregation members, spiritually and socially, and to integrate new members into the life of the congregation. Fellowship Program teams focus on providing a range of fellowship opportunities - both large scale fellowship events and smaller groups of people with a common interest or purpose. These teams work to create a welcoming and hospitable atmosphere for visitors and members alike on Sunday mornings and other occasions.

Members of the congregation are encouraged to become involved in ongoing efforts to expand Living Water's Fellowship Program. The creation of new endeavors is always an option, if volunteers wish to step forward and organize activities that will enhance fellowship within the Living Water community. Hard working ministry teams spearheaded efforts to offer a variety of fellowship opportunities in 2025. Descriptions of their activities appear Below:

CAMPUS CREW – Ron Ophaug

Campus Crew was started in the fall of 2018. The purpose of this group is to take on small projects around the Living Water campus. Light maintenance projects are being done, as needed. There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex and anyone interested in helping out is most welcome.

FRIDAY MORNING CLUB—Julie Ann Walker

The Friday Morning Club's responsibility is to be helping hands to the Living Water

Office Staff. Duties include:

- ☐ Take care of changing the monthly table décor in the Fellowship Hall
- ☐ Watch to make sure the kitchen is organized and tidy
- ☐ Assist with special decorations
- ☐ Help with Christmas projects, including Christmas Eve candles
- ☐ Other duties as needed
- ☐ FMC enjoys conversation and devotions on the first Friday of each month.

GREAT GATHERINGS—Diane Klumpp, Marty Lindert, Linda Hoening

The purpose of great gatherings is to provide a venue for members and guests of Living Water to join in a large group fellowship. The group coordinated two events in 2025. We hosted the Reformation Potluck at our church for approximately 80 people. Many church members pitched in to help us set up, serve and clean up. We really appreciated Pastor Dennis Nelson's help in talking about the history of Reformation Sunday, Saying Grace and dismissing the congregation. Next year we will arrange for additional help for those with canes and walkers to go through the line and carry their plates to the tables.

We hosted the Annual Advent Dinner at Spirit In The Desert. We had approximately 50 people present. The comments by the attendees were very favorable. We were grateful for the help from the staff at Spirit in the Desert, especially Chef Carl who always does a superb job with the menu. We also appreciated the willingness of others who helped us with set up and clean up.

In 2026 we plan to repeat these two events as well as a third event this Spring that is yet to be determined. Reformation Potluck October 25, Advent Dinner December 5.

Diane Klumpp, Marty Lindert and Linda Hoening will continue on the Leadership Team with continued help from many others.

Respectfully Submitted, Diane Klumpp

LEFSE MAKING—Bob and Myrna Ulland

Lefse is often called a Norwegian tortilla, and this holiday tradition is enjoyed by all who participate. The goal is to have some fun together while we provide an opportunity to those interested in lefse to roll and fry pre-made dough. No experience required!

In 2025, we again gathered at Joan Sprinkle's kitchen with the Ullands coordinating two afternoon sessions. Thank you to Joan for her gracious hospitality and to Lynda Cales for letting us borrow her lefse-making equipment. A perfect time to enjoy this tradition together while enjoying the fellowship of our Living Water lefse lovers!

LIVING ART—Leila Burrus

The purpose of Living Art is to glorify God's creation via art appreciation and art creation. By working together, we gain inspiration and build a caring community of artistic believers. Beginning artists and all art lovers welcomed.

Events Include: Dinner and Art Walk; Painting events, visit Art Museums; Art shows; and painting or crafts get togethers.

SAINTS & SINNERS—Sue Stenehjelm; Wayne and Leila Burrus

The purpose of Saints & Sinners Small Group Fellowship is to build a stronger and more vital church body by establishing and nurturing camaraderie among church members and visitors.

This is accomplished by organizing participants into small groups of twelve to fifteen and having the leader of each small group organize a function or get together. These small group activities are held in the months of February and March.

In 2025 there were 91 participants consisting of 35 couples and 21 singles.

SPLENDID TABLE—**Kristi Winter and Julie Ann Walker**

In 2025 we continued to coordinate meals for fellowship that included: New Member Dinners, a Baby Shower for Christina Hall and family, Hospitality for a Spirit in the Desert event, Easter Brunch, a celebration party for VBS, 2 Open the Door/Do More Fundraising events and the Thanksgiving Pie Service. We enjoyed providing these special gathering events for our congregation and guests and look forward to more opportunities in the coming year.

SUNDAY MORNING HOSPITALITY—**Diane Salinas and Julie Ann Walker**

This Ministry Team coordinates, Refreshments on Sunday mornings to Provide fellowship opportunities for members and visitors. Refreshments, consisting of donuts and other treats, along with coffee, iced tea & lemonade are served after the 10:00 AM service. This team also arranges cakes and cookies to celebrate Confirmation, Graduation and other special occasions. Volunteers from the congregation who Are willing to serve are greatly appreciated. There is a signup sheet on the table in the Fellowship Room. For further information, contact Diane at (480) 205-9860.

**WITNESS MISSION GROUP—****Pastor Mark Rossman**

Our witness team is comprised of the following functions: Evangelism, Marketing, Serving our Community, Outreach, Advertising, and Sharing the Gospel. These are all descriptors that relate to supporting LWLC's

Purpose Statement..."To Be and Make Disciples of Jesus Christ."

NEW MEMBER CLASS – Pastor Mark Rossman

This past year there were two New Member Informational Sessions. These sessions gave the participants a chance to get to know one another a bit better, learn more about Living Water and its history, and discover how each might fit into the ministry work which is done here. After taking the time to share life and faith experiences with one another, the groups took a look into gaining a greater understanding of what spiritual gifts each might hold within their lives. From there we discussed how those gifts might be used to best serve God as a member of Living Water. Each session then closed with a wonderful meal, provided by the Splendid Table Team, with the leadership of the congregation, affording us the time to get to know one another on a deeper level.

PACE (Pro-Active Community Engagement)

Members: Sue Stenehjem, Jill Wehr, Debbie Anderson, Sue Umland, Lisa Moehn

Ministry Team Purpose: The goal of PACE is to sponsor events that bring Living Water members and community members to the church for learning opportunities, entertainment and service.

PACE continued the relationship with the Red Cross with four blood drives in 2025. Over 100 pints of blood were collected. PACE will continue this program in 2026.

There were no other events in 2025, partly because the 25th Anniversary Celebration and the OPEN THE DOORS campaign required a lot of energy. Hopefully, there will be some fun and educational events in 2026.

PRINT & ONLINE PUBLICATIONS—**Jennifer Kelsh**

Our two primary newsletters: weekly ***Connections*** and monthly ***Splash!*** These are both available in print format and digitally on the website. These publications allow members the ability to stay connected remotely and provide copies of the music selections for Sunday services which is in *Connections*, as well as event dates and times, studies, ministry focuses and valuable community programs. Any weekly altar flower dedications and the full weekly prayer request list are also printed in *Connections*.

Snowbirds, those on vacation and others who need to stay home on certain weeks benefit greatly from the up-to-date information in these two newsletters.

Other valuable sources of church information include the monthly bulletin boards which are posted in 4 locations on the Living Water campus as well as the physical bulletin board in the Narthex.

Blast emails are regularly sent, especially with time sensitive information like memorial dates and times, vital member updates, digital security concerns, and any last-minute event changes.

Members can also access information for live events with the posting of bible study recordings, Zoom-format meetings, bible study notes, and congregational updates.

**WORSHIP AND MUSIC MISSION GROUP –****Mark Rossman****MUSIC MINISTRY/ADULT CHOIR/
PRAISE BAND—Christina Hall**

This past year has been one of great service and continuing to praise God through our music ministry. We are so thankful for the choir and praise band members who enhance the worship service each Sunday. The hymns, contemporary songs, and choir anthems are always based on the theme and readings of the week. The annual Christmas Cantata was very well received and featured our praise band team! We want to wish a special send off to our Assistant Music Director, Scott Sims, who has spent many years of service to Living Water and our music ministries. He will be surely missed as he moves to be closer to family in the spring.

ADULT CHOIR/PRAISE BAND—Christina Hall and Scott Sims**PRAISE BAND —Scott Sims, Christina Hall, Dave Dugwyler, Dan Wiebe, Bradley Wallace, Jennifer Dorsch, Frances DeBruyn****ALTAR GUILD—Sharon Westergreen and Diane Sellers**

This committee sets the altar for Holy Communion by lighting the candles and preparing the bread and wine for the pastors and the congregation. Our duties also include cleaning up the altar after church, cleaning the plates and wine goblets, putting water in the baptismal font, taking the offerings and donations from the hunger jar to the safe in the office, maintaining the care of the linens,

and ordering supplies as needed.
Our current members are Sharon Westergreen, Sheila Fankhauser, Janis Fjeld, Ellen Schoenbeck, Sue Boyd, Erika Diaz, Lynda Breault and Diane Sellers.

LITURGICAL ARTS—Sue Stenehjerm

Our mission statement is to enhance the environment of the church campus with visual arts to help congregants glorify God through their worship experiences and to educate parishioners about the meanings of liturgical colors, symbols and seasons.

The official “Church Calendar” has a 3-year rotation that is identified as year A, year B, and year C. The church year for 2025 is in year **C**. The liturgical seasons and the exact dates are identified by this “Church Calendar”.

The church year begins with Advent which is typically soon after Thanksgiving and goes for 12 months until the next Advent. There are six (6) liturgical seasons or festivals throughout the year.

The order in which the seasons occur and the assigned liturgical colors for each are as follows:

- 1) Advent - Blue
- 2) Christmas - White and Gold
- 3) Epiphany - Green
- 4) Lent - Purple
- 5) Easter - White and Gold
- 6) Pentecost - Green

In addition to the six (6) seasons there are five (5) separate Sundays where white drapes and banners are used for just that one Sunday. They are as follows:

- 1) Baptism of our Lord
- 2) Transfiguration of Our Lord
- 3) The Holy Trinity
- 4) All Saints Sunday
- 5) Christ the King.

The Day of Pentecost and Reformation Sunday are the only two (2) Sundays where the liturgical color is red.

Our committee is blessed to have such a dedicated, creative team of people who truly enjoy making our sanctuary a beautiful place to worship.

We are happy to announce that in 2025 we added four new members: Mark Eisenhut, Sharon Humphrey, and Marianne & Philip Kanning have joined us. The Liturgical Arts Team includes Lynda Breault, Leila and Wayne Burrus, Lynda Cales, Linda Hoening, Diane Klumpp, Sharon Westergreen, Marty and Gordon Lindert, Terry Nelson and Sue Stenehjerm

As we say at our Liturgical Arts meetings, “It takes a village”!! Our sincere thanks to such a talented, visionary, enthusiastic team.

If you are interested in participating on our team please contact Sue Stenehjerm or Terry Nelson.

Respectfully Submitted, Sue Stenehjerm

SERVANT TEAMS—

Darnell & Donna Pettengill

Servant Teams fill a valuable role at Living Water. They serve, lead, and oversee the many duties before, during and after our Sunday and special worship services. We seek to involve our year around worshipers, new members and snowbirds.

We have 4-6 servant team leaders assigned to each Sunday of the month. Greeting, ushering and assisting with communion are the principal responsibilities of our servant teams. Added responsibilities occur for baptisms, reception of new members and the celebrations of Thanksgiving, Christmas, Lent and Easter. Each servant team member is

trained, insightful and capable in assisting with emergencies as well as routine functions.

Our servant team members for 2025 were: Debbie Anderson, Mark Anderson, Roz Anderson, Charlie Boyd, Sue Boyd, Fred Bruckner, Lynda Breauit, Rich Cote, Erika Diaz, Denny Dumler, Mike Freesh, Bob Frost, Jim King, Diane Klumpp, Marty Lindert, Lisa Moehn, John Nerison, Judy Nerison, Cindy Ophaug, Ron Ophaug, Donna Pettengill, Darnell Pettengill, Jeri Pounds, Phil Pounds, Darrell Shipley, Ed Shipley, Sue Stenehjerm, Steve Umland, Sue Umland and Sharon Westergreen.

Thanks to all for their service!
Respectfully Submitted,
Darnell & Donna Pettengill
Servant Team Leaders

SPECIAL SERVICES –Frances DeBruyn

The Special Services Ministry facilitates three Church Services: Baptisms, Marriages, and Funerals/ Memorials. Each child being baptized receives a handcrafted Faith Chest with instructions for use as the child grows, a handmade baby blanket or cross (depending on the age of the child), a book, a candle, and certificates for both the child and the sponsors. We are deeply grateful to Jay Lucas for making the beautiful Faith Chests, and to the Prayer Shawl Ministry for their lovely baby blankets. For weddings, we help the family gain access to the church and make sure they adhere to regulations (like no confetti) set out in the Wedding Pamphlet prepared by

Pastor Mark. Funerals are in many ways our most challenging and also rewarding mission. The goal of the Special Services Ministry is to relieve the family of some of the planning burden while helping at the services and providing light refreshments to full luncheons afterward (if desired) to encourage the community that has gathered to engage in fellowship. We are blessed that so many members of Living Water Lutheran Church contribute generously of their time and talents to make these events a blessing to the families.

Frances DeBruyn



GIVING MISSION GROUP

STEWARDSHIP—PASTOR MARK ROSSMAN

Results of the Stewardship Drive for 2025 pledges indicate a substantial increase over the 2024 drive. The amount pledged for 2025 increased by 15.6%. In addition, the number of pledges submitted for 2025 increased by 10.7% over pledges received last year. The pledge amount, which exceeded \$650,000 - the largest amount pledged in the history of Living Water - is being incorporated into the LWLC budgeting process for 2025.

2024 Meeting Minutes

Living Water Lutheran Church

Annual Meeting February 11, 2024

Call to order by Church Council President Darnell Pettengill at 11:05am.

Approval of Minutes from Annual Meeting 2023

A MOTION was made, was seconded, and was carried to approve the annual meeting minutes from February 12, 2023.

Acknowledgement of Retiring Council Members

Darnell Pettengill thanked **Don Pick** for his term as Vice President and **Debbie Anderson** for her term as Secretary and Member-at-large.

Introduction and Election of New Church Council Members

New and returning Church Council members' biographies were available in print for review by the congregation.

Sue Boyd – Vice President for a two-year term

James King – Member-at-large for a two-year term

Lisa Moehn – Secretary for a two-year term

A MOTION was made, was seconded, and was carried to approve the slate of candidates as submitted. Voting for Church Council members proceeded by written ballot. The slate of candidates was unanimously approved by the congregation with a count of 60 ballots.

Pastor Mark's Report (Pastor Mark's full report is online.)

- Pastor Mark underscored the message from his report that Living Water is a congregation that gives so much to all of us.
- He stressed that love, kindness, and participation is huge in this church, and it is a blessing to have us all as a part of Living Water's ministries.

Pastor Shari's Report (Pastor Shari's full report is online.)

- Pastor Shari commented that she had recently filled out a report for the bishop, and she noted one of the questions: "What brings you joy?" Pastor Shari's answer emphasized her love for connecting people to opportunities to service that give the individual meaning and purpose. She offered a "Big Thanks" to all who said "Yes" because ministry is "team sport."
- The Church Council works well together and is "active and caring."
- Although we don't always see youth on Sunday morning, there are twelve youth consistently involved in Confirmation and six children in Family

Sunday School. Six youth are signed up for the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans this summer. Highlights:

- The Volunteer Lunch was a “joy” and will be repeated. A suggestion was made during the luncheon to restart the Eucharistic Ministry.
- The Healing Service was “meaningful” and elicited positive feedback; it will be repeated.

Treasurer’s Report

- Treasurer Steve Umland walked the congregation through the budget for 2024.
- The budget for 2024 totals \$904,226.

Treasurer’s Comments:

- Revenues are hard to predict. We have budgeted 100% of pledged offerings for 2024.
- Non-pledged offerings continue to grow.
- The budget amounts for 2024 reflect an assumption of an inflation rate of 3%. The majority of expenses are fixed: personnel, mortgage, synod obligation, and Spirit in the Desert support. It is hard to predict what Living Water might need to maintain the facilities.
- This is a deficit budget by \$9,080.

Questions:

- The former “building fund” was absorbed into the general fund. Why are they still separated?

Answer: Some people still designate money for the mortgage fund. Listing that separately is a way to keep track.

- What is the logic of limiting our benevolence to only pledged funds and not including non-pledged funds? Those providing non-pledged funds are not contributing to places we feel are important.

Answer: Many people are in disagreement with policies of the ELCA and prefer that their contributions do not support those policies. We have to consider that if Living Water gave 10% of ALL contributions to the ELCA, would some people stop giving altogether or would they choose to leave Living Water?

- How much of non-pledged offerings are represented by that philosophy – a philosophy in disagreement with ELCA policies?

Answer: We don’t know.

Pastor Mark: The Church Council is continuing this policy because it has been in place since I (Pastor Mark) came to Living Water. The present leadership is not responsible for creating the policy; this is just the way it has been for at least the last ten years.

Treasurer: Please note that when Living Water was undergoing its financial difficulties due to the embezzlement, and suspended its payments to the synod, the synod was very understanding and did not contact Living Water for missed payments.

- How is the Praise Band paid and how much does the Praise Band cost Living Water?

Answer: The Praise Band is paid on the basis of time sheets the musicians submit. It is difficult to give a precise figure without looking at it carefully, but it is about \$13-15,000/year and is billed as a Personnel Expense. Costs for music and supplies come out of the Worship & Music fund and increase the yearly cost for the band to about \$20,000.

A **MOTION** to approve the 2024 Financial Ministry Plan as submitted was made, **was seconded, and was carried.**

Old Business

None

New Business

A MOTION was made, was seconded, and was carried to allow the Church Council to staff the following teams: Synodical Assembly Delegates, Mission Endowment Fund of Living Water Lutheran Church, Audit Team.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:43am by Church Council President Darnell Pettengill
Minutes submitted by outgoing Secretary Debbie Anderson

2025 Annual Meeting Agenda

Living Water Lutheran Church Annual Meeting—11:00 AM, February 9, 2026 AGENDA

1. Call the Meeting to Order
2. Opening Prayer—Pastor Shari
3. Call for Quorum
4. Adopt Minutes of the 2025 LWLC Annual Meeting
5. Election of Congregation Council and Living Water Endowment Fund Committee
6. Pastor Mark Rossman's Report
7. Pastor Shari Bernau's Report
8. Darnell Pettengill President's Report
9. Steve Umland Treasurer's Report & Adoption of 2026 Budget
10. Select Ed Montessori School
11. New Business
12. Closing Prayer—Pastor Mark
13. Adjourn

Thank you,
Darnell Pettengill

Jesus says, "Whoever drinks the water I give them, will never thirst." - John 4:14



Living Water Lutheran Church is a warm, vibrant, young, energetic, welcoming, missional community of faith in the Pinnacle Peak area of north Scottsdale. Situated in the beautiful Sonoran Desert in the shadow of Pinnacle Peak, we are a gathered and sent people grateful for God's grace and excited about sharing the good news of Jesus Christ by our worship, words and deeds.

We are life-long Lutherans and people brand new to faith. We are children, youth, young adults, families, empty nesters, young retirees, seniors and saints of all age. We are native Arizonans and transplants from all across the country. WE are those who prefer a more traditional but still creative form of worship featuring hymns and liturgy, and those who worship best in a more casual setting with praise music and a band. We serve our neighbors near and far in a variety of ways.



We love to get fellowship and have fun. We are growing in our faith and in our knowledge of God's word. We are God's people in this place, joyfully worshiping, gratefully serving, generously sharing and warmly inviting our neighbors to join us.

Living Water is a member congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

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OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

*"To Be and to Make Disciples
of Jesus Christ."*



OUR VISION STATEMENT:

*To create a community which Welcomes all people;
Shares the experience of God's grace; Grows in faith;
and is Sent out into the world to care.*



www.LWLCAZ.org