



2024 Annual Report

Mar-Lu-Ridge Conference and Educational Center

Mission Statement: Rooted in Christ, we welcome all to encounter God's love through sacred hospitality, deepening relationships, and care for creation.

Board of Directors:

Rev. Kathy Ierien, President

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Bishop William Gohl

Bishop Leila Ortiz

Madison Baber

Melissa Wanner

Rev. Amy Asendorf Berger

Diana Edelblute – Assoc. Director

Community – Service - Sanctuary



Sunset from Shock Rock

"I thank God each time I remember you." Philippians 1:3

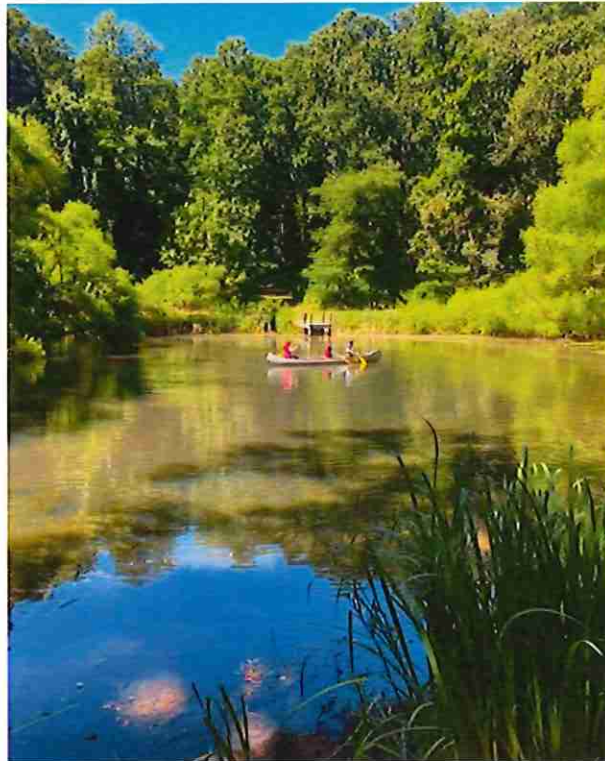
Your prayers and support mean a great deal to us, and we remember you daily in our own prayers. No gift is more important than another, so whether you are a monthly donor, like to support one particular fundraiser, or give to each fundraiser through the year, we appreciate you!

Thank you for lifting up the ministry of Mar-Lu-Ridge.

We want to include a special thank you to all those people who have directed their Thrivent Choice dollars to Mar-Lu-Ridge. In 2024, we received over \$8,000! This has been a tremendous blessing each month, and we deeply appreciate you choosing our ministry for these donations.

Thrivent Action Teams are another blessing to our ministry. Members sponsored tools for Americorps, kitchen utensils and pans/pots, and mailing supplies, Thank you for sharing your generosity!

We appreciate our partnership with the DE MD Synod and the Metropolitan DC Synod of the ELCA. Groups associated with these synods utilize our facility for meetings and retreats, and also send youth to summer camp. Additionally, both synods contribute financially to help meet the needs of our ministry. We are grateful for the support of our Bishops: Bishop Leila Ortiz (Metro DC), and Bishop Bill Gohl (DE MD) for their prayers and counsel as we strive to improve and increase the ministry of Mar-Lu-Ridge.



Family Camp canoeing on Junior Pond

Pass It On fund – note our new name!

Members of the Pass It On fund have pride in the rich history of Mar-Lu-Ridge and are committed to a vision of its continuation as a part of God's tomorrow. We thank and recognize the following people who have chosen to include Mar-Lu-Ridge in their planned giving strategy:

Rev. Gerry and Mrs. Elizabeth Rickel
Mrs. Joan Orso*
Dr. Monica E. Yost
Rev. Darrell and Mrs. Mary Layman
Mrs. Ilona Ries*
Mrs. Phyllis Nichols*
Mr. Thomas Bikle
Anonymous
Rev. Chris Ramsey*
(*deceased)

Anonymous*
Rev. Eric and Rev. Wendolyn Trozzo
Anonymous
Ms. Carol Johnson*
Rev. Donald and Mrs. Miriam Keyser
Mr. Mark Huffman
Mr. David and Mrs. Judy Price*
Mrs. Sandy Banko
Mrs. Margaret Powers*

From the President of our Board of Directors:

*Rooted in Christ, we welcome all to encounter God's love
through sacred hospitality, deepening relationships and care for creation.*

What a tremendous year this was for Mar-Lu-Ridge, as we celebrated our history and looked forward to a bright future! A highlight of the year was the "Come Home" celebration, June 7-8, 2024, marking 65 years of outdoor ministry on the mountain. This event brought together campers from across the decades to explore, connect, worship and renew. How beautiful it was to meet campers from the early years of MLR, to hear stories of transformation and faith, to remember our own experiences over the years, and to see the current staff at work. This celebration was a tremendous opportunity to highlight just what a unique and precious gift Mar-Lu-Ridge continues to be in our community.

A poignant moment during the anniversary celebration came as we decommissioned Cabins 1 and 2. Pastor Amy Asendorf Berger and Pastor Charlie Frekot created a beautiful liturgy, with space to remember the sacred stories of welcome and belonging embodied in these buildings. Campers of all ages gathered to say farewell, but also to feel a sense of hope that even as one season ends, another will begin on the Ridge.

2024 also brought the public launch of our "With Open Arms" Capital Campaign. Work has already begun, thanks to the generous support of many and the keen leadership of our staff, to make the Ridge Inn accessible to all. Thank you to the individuals, congregations and groups who have supported this work so heartily.

In a world where much is changing, Mar-Lu-Ridge continues to serve as an outpost of sacred hospitality. As our mission statement says, we welcome *all* to encounter God's love. We are deeply committed to providing sacred hospitality, to deepen relationships and to care for God's beautiful creation. These principles guide our decisions and goals for the future and are the cornerstone of this ministry.

It has been my humble privilege to serve in this role, alongside our excellent staff and the members of the Board of Directors. I want to thank Executive Director Sarah Lefler for her wisdom and deep commitment to this ministry and Associate Director Diana Edelblute for her endless energy and creativity. Thank you to the rest of the staff for your partnership and dedication to this place. I also thank the fellow members of our Board of Directors for their service.

As this new year begins, my prayers are with you, as I step away from this role and begin a new call in Seattle, WA. Thank you for your partnership. May God's abundant blessing continue to guide us.

With gratitude and peace,
The Rev. Kathleen A. Ierien
President, Mar-Lu-Ridge Board of Directors



Friends from the 60s and 70s enjoying the 65th anniversary

A message from the Executive Director:

We are grateful for your continued support as we serve folks in our community. Our ministry is growing, with increased numbers of retreat guests and summer campers, just over 5,200 in 2024! It is our joy to hear the stories of people's first, or one-hundredth, experience on the Ridge.

In June, we celebrated our 65th anniversary with a two-day event which welcomed over 200 friends! We sang in the dining hall and around the fire, we worshipped in Salem on the Mountain Chapel, and shared memories from days serving on summer staff. Guests and campers from each decade joined in the fun, and it was a weekend to remember. While we looked back fondly, we also looked ahead with anticipation and joy!

Our With Open Arms capital campaign is in its second year, and many congregations and donors from around our synods and community have supported our efforts to make our facilities fully accessible. With just over \$926,000 in pledges and gifts to date, we began the renovations at Ridge Inn which will include accessible restrooms on both levels as well as an elevator. We can't wait to share the good news that this facility can safely welcome all.

Summer camp is a source of excitement, faith exploration, and leadership opportunities. Our staff of young adults are enthusiastic, well trained, kind, and inclusive. They love sharing camp traditions and new programming with our campers. We served 400 folks ages 6-80 through our week-long overnight camps, day camp, and Family Camp. One of the fastest growing programs is

Family Camp, and we added a third session to accommodate everyone! My personal thanks to Associate Director Diana Edelblute for her vision and commitment to cultivating a supportive and inclusive summer camp environment.

Improvements to our facilities are happening every day, thanks to our amazing maintenance team. They are renovating restrooms, adding lighting and fans, refurbishing floors, and so much more. Their work helps make us all more comfortable and safe.

Our innovative programming welcomes in immigrants and refugees through our partnership with Global Refuge. Grant money helped us arrange a Young Adult retreat for early 2025, add to our High Ropes and Challenge courses, and allows us to welcome every camper who wishes to attend through our Campership fund.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support. We are a community that welcomes and shares unconditional love, just as Christ taught us.

Peace,
Sarah Lefler

Associate Director's Report

Our summer theme, *Created to Be*, mirrored the ELCA Youth Gathering theme this year. Each day, campers and staff pondered how God created them to be free, authentic, brave, disciples, and disruptive. The theme verse came from Psalm 139:14: "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works, that I know very well." In a time when life outside of camp is full of constant comparisons and reminders of how we are not good enough, we dove deeper into God's abiding presence and love for us. Through bible studies and worship, challenge courses and high ropes, hiking and nature studies, arts and crafts and pool time, we remembered God made *us* and in this beloved community, we are not only enough, but are celebrated, just as we are.

There was much to celebrate during Summer 2024. In seven weeks of program, 274 unique campers attended for a total of 313 registrations. Fourteen of those campers attended re-envisioned day camp, led by Madison Baber. We added a third (!) Family Camp, a weekend mini-camp, and introduced several new families to the joys of camp. Family Camp continues to break records and had a total of 90 participants this year, ranging in age from 7 months to 82 years. Our tier-pricing breakdown was Tier 1: 30%, Tier 2: 12%, Tier 3: 51%, Day Camp: 4%, and Confirmation Camp: 2%. Thanks to the generosity of our community of donors, we gifted almost \$17,000 in camper and volunteer scholarships.

Our 18 summer staff members continued to astound me with their growth, maturity, and good humor. All 18 members were returning staff this year; 11 staff worked full-time all

summer, 2 worked part-time all summer, and 5 worked a partial summer. Two additional young people joined the staff for four weeks after completing the SIT program, including one who was new to MLR, for a total of 20 staff members. Twenty-six volunteers also contributed their time and talents to summer camp this year, assisting with registration, parking, Pastors of the Week, health cabin, cabin counselors and everything in between. I am grateful for the service and leadership of everyone who made this summer a success.

After 65 years, Mar-Lu-Ridge remains a sacred place of self-discovery, connection, and joy. I am humbled to be part of the cloud of witnesses who steward this beautiful place and its ministries.

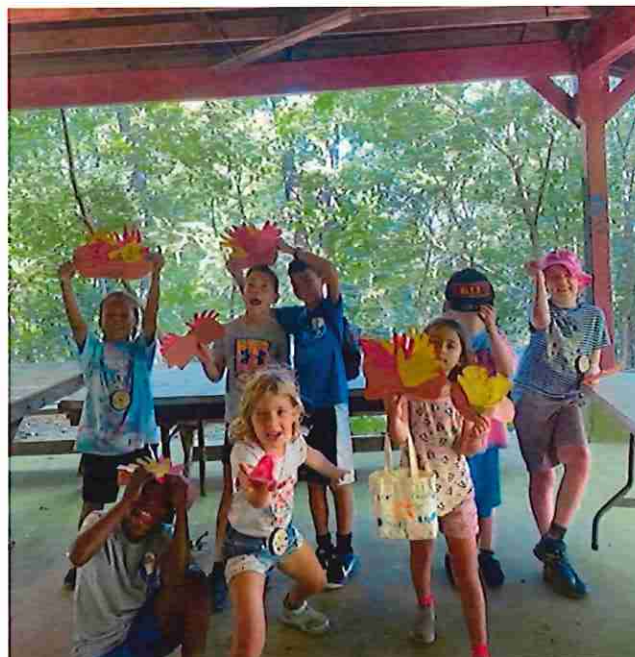
Christ's Peace,
Diana Edelblute

Parent quotes say it best:

Thank you for spreading love. Thank you for making a safe space for kids across the whole gender and sexuality spectrum. Thank you for giving kids a place to play and be silly. Thank you for respecting the gift of the natural world. So happy we found MLR.

Recently, (Camper) asked for a copy of Amazing Grace to remind him of camp. He also commented on how kind the campers & staff were. He wished his school was more like camp. You all make the world a better place!

Keep rocking!





Financial Report for 2024

During 2024, Mar-Lu-Ridge (MLR) continued its revenue recovery from the impact of Covid. For example, revenue from retreats and other camp usage increased by 11 percent relative to the previous year, revenue from summer camp operations increased by 8 percent; and donations covering general operations increased by 13 percent. Overall, MLR operating revenue grew by 9 percent relative to 2023. Furthermore, net income from the first year of the Capital Campaign added an extra \$214,650 to the Camp's financial resources.

Careful resource management in the face of expanding Camp operations limited growth in operating expenses to 10 percent.

To meet financial challenges as we prepare to welcome future generations, MLR remains dependent on donations, grants and Synodical support, as well as growth in revenue from retreats and camps, to meet its expenses. Fortunately, God continues to generously bless the Camp with congregations and individuals, staff and volunteers who are dedicated to supporting this vital ministry. As always, your financial support and earnest prayers are essential and are very much appreciated by everyone who experiences Mar-Lu-Ridge.

Dr. Julianne Nelson
Treasurer, Mar-Lu-Ridge Board of Directors

<u>Income</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
Contributions and Legacy	\$ 282,260	\$ 250,398
Grant Income	\$ 19,250	\$ 18,110
Other Camp Usage	\$ 238,246	\$ 215,567
Summer Camp Operations	\$ 132,619	\$ 122,692
DE/MD Synod	\$ 14,417	\$ 10,863
Metro DC Synod	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000
Camp Scholarship Funds	\$ 14,894	\$ 16,790
Agape Hall Mortgage Donations	\$ -	\$ -
Store Income	\$ 6,293	\$ 8,357
Other Income (incl. Interest)	\$ 8,874	\$ 13,950
Refunds	\$ (6,222)	\$ (4,025)
Total Operating Income	\$ 716,631	\$ 658,702

<u>Expenses</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
Camp Operations	\$ 181,216.87	\$ 168,112
Staff Salaries, Benefits	\$ 362,038.07	\$ 337,439
Payroll & Property Taxes	\$ 24,724.74	\$ 25,090
Services & Insurance	\$ 91,633.84	\$ 75,868
Utilities	\$ 64,610.80	\$ 71,444
Repairs & Maintenance	\$ 84,541.02	\$ 60,178
Agape Hall/Reservoir Mort. Pmts	\$ 24,965.82	\$ 28,636
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 833,731	\$ 766,766

Net Operating Income **(\$117,100)** **(\$108,065)**

Other Income, Expenses

Employee Retention Credit		
Capital Campaign Contributions	\$ 310,927	\$ 315,053
Cap Campaign Proj + Mgmt Exp	\$ 96,277	\$ 114,093
Net Other Income	\$ 214,650	\$ 200,960

Net Total Income **\$97,549** **\$92,895**

Mountaintopper (\$5,000+)

Rev. David & Nancy Asendorf
 Shirley Ernst
 Dr. Julie Nelson
 Ken Anderson & Joan Enerson
 David Price
 Kathy MacDonald
 Rev. Richard & Nancy Ann
 Graham
 John & Laura Holland
 Rev. Bill & Rev. Arwyn Gohl
 Keith & Sarah Lefler
 Tony Kerlavage & Barbara Harner
 DE/MD Synod of the ELCA - Kaste
 Gift, Baltimore
 DE/MD Synod of the ELCA
 Metro DC Synod ELCA
 Trinity LC, Boonsboro
 Grace LC, Westminster
 Christ LC, Baltimore
 First LC, Ellicott City
 Faith LC, Arlington
 Zion Evangelical LC, Middletown
 Christ LC, Bethesda
 Divinity LC, Baltimore
 Salem LC, Catonsville
 Lutheran Home & Hospital
 Foundation
 Loats Foundation
 Delaplaine Foundation

Ridge Runner (\$1,000 - \$4,999)

Martha Adams
 Louis & Lois Ahalt
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 Wendell & Rev. Anna Anderson
 Missy Arp
 Adam & Johanna Bachman
 Roxanne Barrow
 Karin Belsheim
 Michael Belz
 Elise & Gary Bowman
 Marilyn & Robert Converse
 Douglas Davis
 Rev. Joseph Donovan & Cheryl
 Roberson Donovan
 Rev. Bob & Rev. Terri Driver-
 Bishop

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 David & Allison Garman
 Nancy Gordon
 Tom & Suzanne Grove
 Donna Hepner
 Rev. Kristin Hoyer
 Matt & Laura Iager
 Joe Irvin & Suzy Tegge
 Rev. Donald & Miriam Keyser
 Jason Lorentzen
 Hugh McConnell
 Rev. Karl & Caitlin Muhlbach
 Floyd Musk
 Richard & Janet Nickels
 Viola Noffsinger
 Stephen & Sarah Padre
 Tim & Tammy Panther
 Andrew Parker
 Hanna Pillion
 Wendi Rezash
 Rev. Gerry & Elizabeth Rickel
 Larry & Lynn Ries
 Rev. David & Rev. Brenda
 Ritterpusch
 M Lee Ropp
 Terry Switsky
 Thomas & Katharyn Wheeler
 Gifts of Hope Metro DC Synod
 Emmanuel LC, Vienna
 Prince of Peace, Gaithersburg
 St. Martin's LC, Annapolis
 St. Matthew LC, Lake Ridge
 Trinity LC, North Bethesda
 Calvary LC, Mt. Airy
 Christ LC, Millersville
 Emmanuel Trinity, Adamstown
 South Mtn Shared Ministry
 St. John LC, Baltimore
 St. Mark LC, Springfield
 St. Paul LC, Walkersville
 St. Peter LC, Keedysville

Star Reacher (\$500-\$999)

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 Rev. Mathew Berger & Rev. Amy
 Asendorf Berger
 Thomas Burns

Alma Edgerly
 Dr. Raymond Ediger
 Rev. Charlie Frekot
 Scott & Susan Gahs
 LeeAnn & Chris Hart
 Laura Higgs
 Christopher & Marti Horne
 Marc & Julie Howell
 Thomas Kane
 Jim & Julie Kempton
 Valerie & Mike Mayer
 Bob & Deborah Moore
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 Myers Parker
 Talmadge Payton
 Rev. Tom & Linda Perry
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 Kevin Resh
 Sam Rogers
 Mary Anne & Chris Rossbach
 Rev. John & Jane Sabatelli
 Rachel Schmidt
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 Chpn. Paula Thistle
 Becky & Alex Wright
 Amy Zemanick
 Christ the King LC, Great Falls
 Christ the Servant LC, Mont.
 Village
 Christus Victor LC, Baltimore
 Good Shepherd LC, Alexandria
 Good Shepherd LC, Frederick
 Prince of Peace LC, Baltimore
 Resurrection LC, Arlington
 St. John LC, Westminster
 St. Luke LC, Frederick
 St. Paul LC, Upperco
 St. Paul LC, Burkittsville

Ascenders (\$250 - \$499)

Dr. Brittany Ashe
 Rev. David Baker
 Thomas Bikle
 Terri Brown
 Mark D. & Louise Burkhardt
 Rev. Matt & Rev. Diane Day

Robert & Linda DeJong
Craig & Lois Giles
Janice Gonder
Blair Hanauer
Jason Hirsch
Eric & Kristine Holocker
Abigail Kane
Rev. Bert & Dayna Lane
Jonathon Minchoff
Amy Muhlbach
Michael & Lisa Muhlbach
Julia Rasnake
Rita & Tim Newman
Rick & Kimberly Norgaard
Mark & Jennifer Poffenberger
Neil & Patricia Robinson
Kristy Schlueter Kuck
Vanessa Shanks
Steven & Donna Shriver
James Summers & Eleanor
Williams
Virginia Trygstad
Nina Wolff
Rev. Matt Zemanick
St. Peter LC, Ocean City
LCM Univ. DE
Trinity LC, Taneytown
St. Paul LC, Fulton
St. Paul LC, Jefferson
St. Paul LC, Lutherville
Grace LC, Lutherville
LCGS, Bel Air

Ridge Climber (\$100 - \$249)

Rev. Teal Anderson
Rebecca & Ben Crawshaw
Katie Niznansky
Raymond Albert
Sandy & Charles Baber
Albert Brima
Margarete & Neil Donnelly
Stephen & Susan Feldmann
Annette Hauserman
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Christopher & Jennifer Schoen
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Dr. Monica Yost
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Donna Breslyn
Sandy Banko
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Dr. Paul Walker
Russ & Lori Werner
Rev. Madeline Tallman
Susan Harne
Sharon Harris
Linda Howser
Jennifer Marquardt
Meg McConnell
Jon Niznansky
Katrina Straker
Sarah Wright
Melanie Rutkauskus
Janek Bracken
Sarah Burris
Dan Carrier
Robert Chambers
Nancy Charitonuk
Nan Crockett
Nancy Davis
Morris Gold
Lorraine Gordon
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Jeffrey & Mary Hemler
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Gail & Patrick Miglio
Alane O'Neill
Bernard Penner
Jamie Pflasterer
Shirley & Henry Quaskey
Joshua Rauh
Sharon Reeves
Rebecca Reaves
Norma Ross
Rev. Dave & Lexi Schafer
Barry & Betsy Singer
Ruth Sorenson
Michael & Karen Summers
Jill & Doug Tallman

Lisa Tekelenburg
George & Judy Toth
Susan Troutman
Laurie Wilhelm
Rosella Wilson
Brenda Youngren
Bethlehem LC, Fairfax
Abiding Presence LC, Burke
Bethany LC, Brunswick
Immanuel LC, Manchester
Jerusalem LC, Westminster
Light of Christ LC, New Market
Messiah LC, Sykesville
St. Abraham LC, Beckleysville
St. John LC, Baltimore
St. Mark LC, Hagerstown
St. Michael LC, Baltimore
St. Peter LC, Hampstead
Brown & Brown Insurance
DE MD SWO
St. John LC, Rockville
The Brethren Church OH

Community (\$50 - \$99)

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Anonymous
Paul Ries
Laura Taylor
Jennifer Quillen Strauss & David
Strauss
Rev. Eric & Rev. Wendolyn Trozzo
Emma Hull
Kristin & Patrick Bowl
Donald & Debbie Culler
Laura Dillon
Coral Dodds & Homer Yost
Karin Engstrom
Jennifer Gannon
Juliana Guzman
Robert Hauser
David & Katie King
Peter Kuebler
Linda Moss
Theresa O'Sullivan
Albert Shafer
Sharon Stanton
Melissa Wanner

Paul Weber & Florence Jowers
Carol Weitzel
Anne Hall
Georgia Zirkle
Mt. Joy LC, Gettysburg
St. Paul's LC, Funkstown
Carroll Lutheran School

Gifts given in Memory of a loved one:

Wade Martin Zirkle, by Georgia Zirkle
Chuck & Joanne Albright, by Bruce Albright
Ann Elder, by Martha Adams
Ken & Marie Gahs, by Scott & Susan Gahs
Benjamin Horne, by Mary & Jeff Hemler
Ethel Huffman, by Mark Huffman
Andy Garman, by Dave & Allison Garman
Rev. Harry Krug, by Darius & Janet Gross
Rev. LaVerne Rasmussen, by Monica Yost
John Beilfuss, by Rev. Vicki Beilfuss

Of Rev. Ron Reaves, by Sharon Reaves, Laurie Wilhelm, Albert Shafer, Rebecca Reeves, Joshua Rauh, Rev. David & Lexi Schafer, Karin Engstrom, Rev. Albert & Dayna Lane, Rev. Darrell & Mary Layman, Norman Ross, Donald & Debbie Culler, The Brethren Church, Barry & Judith Warrenfeltz, Nancy Zeim, Brenda Youngren & Patrick Hammett, Dr. Raymond Ediger, Nancy Gordon, Rev. David & Rev. Brenda Ritterpusch, Erin Porter

Of Lucretia Reaves, by Brenda Youngren & Patrick Hammett, Laurie Wilhelm

Gifts given in Honor of a loved one:

Bp. Gohl, by Rev. Albert & Dayna Lane, Nancy Gordon, Raymond Albert
Lee Ropp, by Douglas Davis
Edelblute family, by Stephen & Susan Feldmann
Sophie & Allison Keller, by Tom & Suzanne Grove
Julie & Sophia Myers, by Pam & Thomas Lehman
Jordan Hopkins, by Eric & Kristine Holocker
Edie Perone, by Robert Chambers
Sarah Lefler, by Jim & Julie Kempton
Ginny Trygstad, by Robert Hauser
Rev. Darrell Layman & Str. Ruth Coleman, by Anne Hall
Julie Nelson, by Belz family
Muhlbach family, by Barry & Betsy Singer

In Kind gifts:

Janice Gonder, hammocks
Anonymous, sheet sets, towels
Liz Robinson, whiteboards, play goals, markers, hammocks
Laura Higgs, laminator and lam. sheets
Straker family, music stand, friendship string

Erin Carney, changing pods
Rev. Ed Kay, game
Becky Wright, book
Berger family, game
Gilardo family, label maker

With Open Arms Capital Campaign dedications:**Memory:**

Ann Elder, by Martha Adams
Anne Marie Miller, by Kurt Miller
Rev. Harry Krug, Edward & Marie Asher, by Lenora Douglas
Jim Hummel, by Robert Hummel
Hal Warnock & family, by Ruth Warnock

Honor:

Bp. Bill Gohl, by Lutheran Campus Min. UDe
Camp friends & ministry of MLR, by Joe Irvin & Suzy Tegge
Brooke Hart, by Tommie Robinson
Rev. Dave Oravec, by John & Elizabeth Krupp
Lexi & Natalie, by Padre family
Brittany Ashe & Jon Niznansky, by John Geist

Thrivent Choice Donors:

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Miriam Brennan
Thomas Cleaver
Cathleen Coss
Clifford Diehl
Jeffrey & Kaye Derr
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Anita Grooms
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LeeAnn Hart
Andrea Heyser

Carrah Holmes
Julie and H Marc Howell
Anna Marie Howser
Lawrence Howser
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James Kempton
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Gayle Krol
Rev. Albert and Dayna Lane
Leona Maggiti
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Valerie Mayer
Nancy McIntrye
Stephanie Miller
Valerie Mount
John Muhlbach
Rita Newman
Viola Noffsinger
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Kendra Wells
Doreen Young
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Rev. Amy Asendorf Berger &
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Sarah Wright
Rev. Karl & Caitlin Muhlbach
Valerie Mayer
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Hanna Pillion
Rev. Ray Ranker
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Kristy Schlueter-Kuck
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Brittany Ashe
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Laura Higgs
Karin Belsheim
Rebecca Crawshaw
Katharyn Wheeler
Missy Arp
Donna Breslyn

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Christine Myers Parker