

Annual Reports from the Congregational President and Pastor Peace Lutheran Church Annual Meeting, December 14, 2025

2025 Annual Report and Reflections from Congregational President Gretchen Duggan

Dear People of Peace,

Guided by our mission, vision, future directions, and core values, the church council seeks to support the work of Peace Lutheran, to keep us on a course aligned with what we say we believe. We do it imperfectly, and we do it with our hearts in the right place. That's just how it goes. Oh, and sometimes we do it slowly—not everyone's favorite way, I know.

As I think of 2025, I'm thinking of our staff. We've experienced many staff changes this year, and we're preparing for more. Early in the year we welcomed Michael Green as our new Choir Director, and said goodbye to our Children's, Youth & Intergenerational Ministry Coordinator, Jayna Detweiler. After visioning new roles, the church hired a new Youth Minister, Manis Pierre, and we'll soon welcome our new Children's Minister, Annabell Davis-Bloom! Thanks to everyone who helped create our Child, Youth & Vulnerable Adult Protection Policies & Procedures document so it could be approved in time for these new leaders to join the ministry.

Another significant change is coming. We're celebrating Deacon Charissa moving into the new work she's called to, and we're anticipating the loss of her presence. Every person at Peace brings something and leaves something; we all matter. You've learned by now that we aren't rehiring to fill the exact role Deacon Charissa has worked in these past 2 years. The decision not to directly rehire (or initiate a call process for a Deacon) is not a reflection of the value Deacon Charissa brought to us. Rather, this choice is an acknowledgement that the position was created for the unique combination of gifts and skills Charissa brought to the role. And, this pause gives the staff, council, and church time to discern what is most needed in this phase of life at Peace, especially as our partnership with the Peace Community Center continues to unfold. (Did you know our partnership with PCC is named in our mission statement? This relationship is not a side note in our work!) We want to be open to the potential for a shared staff position with PCC, and we acknowledge that this is not an immediate or sure solution. We'll be discerning hiring needs as an Executive Committee in close communication with staff. We thank Deacon Charissa for all the care she's given to Peace over many years of leadership in many forms.

I'm grateful to all who served on council in 2025, and to those who will work together on council in 2026. Thank you! To our staff, thank you for how you guide and ground the Peace community, for how you keep us together and make our community possible in a myriad of ways from the practical to the imperceptible. And church, don't forget, community is about gathering, giving, and receiving, so even if you feel like all you did was show up this year, thank you for that too!

With love and care, Gretchen Duggan, Council President

2025 Annual Report from Pastor John

Dear People of Peace,

Our theme this fall has been, "**Stewards of God's Love: Down, In, and Out.**" This year I'm reminded again as I serve as your pastor that God provides so many gifts and blessings for our community out of God's grace and abundance. God's love comes **down** to us, especially in Jesus. And God invites our response to these gifts—to be open to God's gifts not only flowing *to us* but also flowing *through us* **in** our community and **out** to the world. Together at Peace Lutheran Church we seek to help one another use our God-giving gifts to serve God, others, and God's world—to live into God's vision to be a diverse community of faith where all are welcome—a community that is Spirit-filled, compassionate, healthy, reconciled, and just.

This year our focus, prayers and energies have been in worship and faith education, living into our Future Directions (our foundational commitment to anti-racism and ministry of place in housing and community resources ministry), visioning for and staffing our children's/youth/family ministry, and Peace Community Center's community engagement and strategic planning process. This year was also my sabbatical year (in the summer).

2026 will be another exciting year as our two work groups continue to help us live into our Future Directions action plans (including our housing feasibility study for expanding our housing ministry), we build our children's and youth ministry supported by two new staff people, and we partner with Peace Community Center as the Center moves from strategic planning to a new chapter. The 2026 Ministry Plan lays out the steps we've taken in Future Directions toward our vision, shares stories of our ministries this past year, and suggests ways we're moving forward. **I share highlights of 2025 here.**

- **Spirit-filled Worship:** Spirit-filled worship on Sundays is the heart of our faith community. God meets us with a word of grace and power and sends us out to serve. In addition to Sunday in-person worship, many folks regularly worship online. Many people serve and lead in worship, and we're inviting more folks to jump in! Special Sunday worship experiences in 2025 included Global Mission Sunday in February, the Women of Peace Retreat Reflection Sunday in May, every Sunday in the summer as we heard sermon messages from a variety of people of Peace while I was on sabbatical, September's Rally Sunday, guest musician Lasana Kanneh (from IJenNeh) leading music on a Sunday in November, as well as powerful Christmas Eve and Easter Sunday worship experiences. Thanks to Twylla Moore for her leadership as Music Director and Michael Green for taking leadership as Choir Director this year!
- **Gratitude for Deacon Charissa: Deacon Charissa Carroll, our full-time Deacon of Congregational Care and Community Resources, is stepping down at the end of this year (2025).** We're grateful for Deacon Charissa's service and will bless and send her and Malcolm and family on their way as she starts a new chapter on her own in grief and life coaching.
- **Faith Education:** We offer four faith opportunities each Sunday morning—children's Godly Play, 4th-6th grade Explorers, 7th-8th grade Feet to Faith, and an adult/older youth class. Community Bible Study and many other small faith-connection groups met regularly.
- **Small Groups:** This year we've grown in small group opportunities for scripture study, prayer, fellowship, and growing in faith. New groups include a weekly men's breakfast, four women's Bible studies (that began after the Women's Retreat), and the For a Time Such As This group that arose to provide a space for folks to meet to listen to God and share with others about how to live as a faithful follower of Jesus now, in America, during such a time as this.
- **Peace Devotional Book:** Our second Peace Lutheran Church devotional book was published this year! Shari Shelton and the Writing Group spearheaded this massive project! As we grieve Shari's death this summer and thank God for her life, we are grateful for this legacy gift of love from her and all contributors! Thanks be to God! The book is available for purchase in the church office.
- **Future Directions:** As a congregation, we're living into our Future Directions, where God is calling our church to go in the future as we seek to love God and love our neighbor in this time and this place. We have a Foundational Commitment to Anti-racism and four Future Directions Recommendations. Two Work Groups guide the congregation forward—an Anti-racism Work Group and a Ministry of Place Work Group. See the detailed report in the Ministry Plan. We're inviting all of us to pray for these Future Directions and "get in where you fit in" as we live into these directions in the future.
- **Anti-Racism Commitment and Cultural Humility Training:** The Anti-Racism Work Group was hard at work this past year continuing to help us live into our commitment to anti-racism. Highlights include supporting our use of the new anti-racism toolkit (with equity lenses to use to evaluate ministries, policies, and decisions), learning opportunities of inclusivity and belonging, micro-actions lists for taking positive action in these challenging times, and engaging consultants KJ and AJ Williams of RiseWithUs to provide coaching with Pastor John and to create training videos in cultural humility and inclusivity. Thanks to Julia Kagochi for her overall leadership.
- **Ministry of Place and Housing Ministry:** This has been a year of completing repairs and maintenance and ensuring all four homes we steward in housing ministry have tenants. We provide affordable housing for four families in our Hilltop neighborhood in which gentrification has displaced many long-term residents, especially families of color. The Ministry of Place Work Group is discerning how to expand our housing ministry, and a special team is meeting with Liminal Land Consultants for a housing feasibility study exploring building on our available land to make a greater impact in this time of affordable housing urgency in the Hilltop. Thanks to Brendan Nelson, Director of Community Engagement and Outreach, and the Ministry of Place and Housing teams for their good work.
- **Community Resources Ministry:** Peace Café is open Fridays 3-7 pm for the community to hang out and share fellowship, with Community Meals every Friday from 5:30-6:30 pm. We share community resource information in areas such as housing, job training, health care, and VA benefits. As Resource Navigator Deacon Charissa steps down at the end of this year (2025), volunteers will take greater

responsibility on Fridays. Operations Manager Damishe Greenwood-Walker coordinates meal providers and servers. We no longer serve April and October community meals so we are able to focus on strengthening the Friday community resources ministry and other support we provide to the community.

- **Grants for Ministry:** We're grateful to God for grants we received that have supported community ministry this past year: a synod Shalom grant, an ELCA Hunger grant and Big Dream grant extension, a Neeb grant, a Tacoma Public Utilities grant.
- **Children and Youth Ministry:** **Children:** Key ministries include Sunday School (Godly Play, Explorers), Children's Worship Time, Lent midweek children's activities, Summer Bible Adventure (The Commandments), and special children's outreach events (Easter Eggstravaganza, Harvest Fest, and Children's Christmas Celebration). A Children's Ministry Leadership Team carries out children's ministry. **Youth:** Youth ministry continues with the Feet to Faith Confirmation class, youth service opportunities, youth dinners, and summer servant learning mission experiences. In this year's transitional time in children and youth ministry staffing (as Jayna Detweiler stepped down from her role at the end of January), a Vision and Staffing Task Force renewed our vision and goals for ministry and put together job descriptions for two new positions. We hired Manis Pierre as part-time Youth Minister (starting in November) and Annabell Davis-Bloom as part-time Children's Minister (starting in the new year 2026).
- **Men's and Women's Ministry:** Men's weekly breakfast Bible study and women's Bible studies and special women's events are happening. Women had a wonderful retreat in May 2025. Deacon Charissa has provided staff leadership for women's ministry.
- **Ministry of Administration:** We finalized new child, youth, and vulnerable adult protection policies.
- **Peace Community Center:** Peace Community Center has long served Hilltop youth and families through tutoring, mentoring, and support. We're currently in a transition time without academic programming and staff. A community engagement and strategic planning process is concluding, and the Center will follow a new strategic plan as we move into the new year in partnership with the church!
- **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Multiethnic/ Intersectional Ministries Cohort:** We are an active part of this new ministry network in our larger ELCA. Brendan Nelson and I are participating in monthly network calls with leaders from other multiethnic and intersectional ministry contexts, as well as occasional gatherings. Peace Lutheran Church will host the next gathering in February 2026.
- **Public Recognition:** Peace was publicly recognized at Tacoma's Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration in January 2025!
- **My Sabbatical:** I'm grateful to God and to Peace Lutheran Church for the gift of a sabbatical after another six years of service as pastor. My family enjoyed a three-month break this past summer for rest and renewal, exploring the blessing and calling of hospitality. Thanks to all who served and led in my absence. Please keep serving and leading!

Moving forward...

- **Future Directions:** In 2026 we will continue to live into our Future Directions, grounded in the Foundational Commitment to Anti-racism, as we respond to God's love in love and service to God and our neighbor. Through the leadership of our two work groups, we'll move forward with our action plans. We will strengthen our ministry in the Hilltop, especially through housing and Peace Café/community meals and resources (ministry of place). As we move into a new chapter without Deacon Charissa on staff, we'll invite more folks to jump in and serve or deepen their involvement. We're nearing the end of a feasibility study in expanding our housing ministry with possibilities of building additional housing on vacant land. We will deepen our faith offerings lifting up the values of Jesus that are the core values of Peace (catechism of Peace) as we seek to understand, address, and dismantle racism. We will grow in understanding of each person's gifts and work to create opportunities for one another to serve and lead (priesthood of all believers).
- **Children's and Youth Ministry:** With new staff people and renewed vision and goals, we will move into our next chapter knowing that children's and youth ministry is a ministry of our whole church!
- **Peace Community Center Strategic Planning and Implementation:** As the strategic plan is soon finalized, in partnership with Peace Lutheran Church, the Center's new chapter will begin to take shape!
- **Damishe Greenwood-Walker Sabbatical:** Our Operations Manager Damishe is granted a one-month sabbatical in this next year. Thanks be to God for her committed service to God and our community!

Here are a few other notable details of 2025 in ministry.

- **Stewardship:** The Stewardship Team helped guide us into a deeper understanding of God as the giver of all we are and have and of our calling to live as good stewards of God's gifts. The fall "Stewards of God's Love" series culminated in Commitment Sunday in which we offered our giving plans (time, talent, treasure) for the church. To date Peace has received 39 financial pledges totaling \$316,928 toward 2026 ministry. Thanks be to God for the ways you serve God through Peace Lutheran Church!
- **Church Council:** Thanks to Council for a good year. Huge thanks to Gretchen Duggan who served as Council President this year. Thanks to Lenora Sneva (Secretary, moving to Vice President in 2026), Zoe Forbes (Community Resources), Neoma Clay (Outreach/Evangelism), Rebecca Foster (Inreach), Lorena Guerrero (Education), and Nora Hanawalt (Youth) who continue on Council in 2026! Thanks to outgoing Council members Tim Chalberg (Treasurer), Gail Storrs (Vice President), and Melody Duke (Stewardship). Major Whitten served briefly in Worship this year. Welcome to new Council members!
- **Church Staff:** I'm grateful to serve in partnership with a strong church staff! Thanks to Brendan Nelson (Director of Community Engagement & Outreach), Deacon Charissa Carroll (Deacon of Congregational Care & Community Resources), Damishe Greenwood-Walker (Operations Manager), Twylla Moore (Music Director), Michael Green (Choir Director), Manis Pierre (Youth Minister), Jenny Haferbecker (Finance Coordinator), Brianna Miller (Nursery Attendant), and Larry Norman (Grounds). Thanks so much for your expressions of appreciation for our church staff, especially staff appreciation Sunday!
- **Evangelism/Outreach:** Ministries of outreach reach folks in our neighborhood, including Community Meals, the Peace Café, the clothing closet, community events, and calling on neighbors.
- **Care and Card Ministry:** Care Ministers are active visiting, calling, bringing meals, and sending cards to those who are hospitalized, ill, confined to their homes, grieving, or lonely.
- **Global Mission:** The Davis family is on furlough in Ohio from Davis' role directing African Inland Mission's (AIM) "Central Region" serving the needs of about 100 missionaries in 6 African countries.
- **Jehovah Jireh Worship Center:** Jehovah Jireh, a Samoan Christian congregation, rents our sanctuary in for worship on Sunday afternoons and once a month on Saturday evenings.
- **New Members** this year: 6. **Baptisms** this year: 6. **Confirmations** this year: 2.
- **Funerals/memorials** this year: 3. **Weddings** this year I officiated: 2.
- **Pastors' Groups:** I attend Tacoma Ministerial Alliance meetings, a scripture study with Tacoma church leaders called "Preaching Peace," regular ELCA rostered persons meetings, and two national groups of ELCA leaders called the ELCA Homelessness and Justice Ministries Network and the Multiethnic/Intersectional Ministries Cohort.
- **Thank you...** for your ongoing partnership in ministry and amazing care and support of me and my family. Thanks especially for the sabbatical and the blessing and recognition at my 25-year anniversary of ordination this year! Our faith community is a blessing!

We are the hands of Christ, opened in love, extended in welcome, joined in worship, offered in service, and reaching for justice. We've come this far by faith! God is leading us into the future!

God's peace, Pastor John