



**2024**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

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*by the numbers!*



**600**

Number of times Lake Ridge set up for worship since it started.

Hours our leadership team met to guide our church this past year.

**54**



**15,000**

Minutes of sermons we've listened to since we began.



Number of songs we've sung since we started.

**3,000**

Number of cups of coffee or tea we've poured for each other.



**5,000**



Total number of Christian ministries registered in Chestermere, the lowest in Alberta.

**3**

**18**

Number of half-read books Preston has piled up around him right now.



**878**

Total congregations in the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Number of RCMP members Preston has cared for as chaplain this past year.



**22**

**34**



Total congregations in the Evangelical Covenant Church in Canada.

**1360**



Number of kids checked in, and welcomed, into kids church each year.



**200**

Fruit gummies consumed by kids each Sunday.

# PASTOR PRESTON'S

# Report

*"The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring."  
Isaiah 58:11*

In my very first year of college, one of my professors used to say often, "God has been, and is, at work preparing a people for himself." This year I think God continues to prepare a people, here in Chestermere, for himself - a people shaped by the life and love of Jesus. This year has seen a number of beautiful shaping moments in our community. Each new turn I see signs of God's goodness growing here.

This year, we grew in how we are the church together. We love to spend time together, to make room at the table for those new to our community, and we are learning to notice, with eyes of compassion, those around us. I've seen people gather to learn, whether it's the teen and adult Alpha course, the Sanctuary Course, or the remarkable Israel Study Tour, book studies, retreat, Ekklesia worship, new Bible studies, concert, film nights, and lake side baptisms - Lake Ridge loves to get together and explore faith in Jesus. I've watched as a new care ministry has grown, a vibrant team of youth and kids ministry leaders have risen up to serve, and more people are discovering that they can bless their church and neighbourhoods profoundly. All of these moments are made up of hundreds of smaller stories that bear witness to God's goodness to us.

We saw this desire for connecting take a surprising step forward as we saw the creation of our new "Lake Ridge Living Room." In early 2023, Camp Chestermere invited us to deepen our connection to the camp by moving our office over there, while doubling our ministry gathering space. Today these spaces accommodate staff and ministry teams to work and meet, and it allows small groups to connect. It's not uncommon for these rooms to be used morning, afternoon, and evening, several days a week. We are grateful to you for supporting this unexpected project, and for joining together to make this space beautiful and welcoming.

The way we talk about our community is growing, too, as we spent 2023 exploring how to be new humans in Christ. This year we have introduced our "Well Watered" theme which will invite us to practice our faith, that we would be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus invites us to do. From our new Lake Ridge bird and fountain logo, to our prayer guide and upcoming website, we are exploring new ways to tell the story and put down deep roots that nourish our life in Jesus.

In 2023 you commissioned me to be the pastor of Lake Ridge Community Church. I am so grateful for your patience and encouragement as my role has changed and grown. I'm learning new ways to preach weekly, serve wisely, care intentionally, and lead in the unique ways God has shaped me to lead. I so love our church community! Through this year we've called together a staff team that is so capable and loving of our community. I'm so grateful for Christina, Victoria, Michelle, and Jennifer who carry much of our shared ministry work with grace. I'm especially grateful to our leadership team. Through our last year of new beginnings, this team, chaired by Andrea Conway, has consistently and prayerfully led our community with grace and discernment. Please encourage your staff and leadership team, every kind word you share, or support you offer to them means so much to us.

In this annual report, which is a snap-shot of our life together over this past year, I would encourage you to notice carefully the ways that "God has been, and is, at work preparing a people for himself." You may, like me, see that God is growing a well-watered garden, a beloved people here in Chestermere who trust Jesus more and more. If you look closely, you may see the ways that Jesus is growing his life in you, too. It is my joy to serve as your pastor.

Peace and all goodness,  
Preston Pouteaux



*"They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do." Psalm 1:3*



# LEADERSHIP'S CHAIR

# Report

In my world outside of Lake Ridge, I lead a team that specializes in designing and launching organizational changes, and then knits those new ways of doing things into the fabric of our organization. When we talk about cycles of change, we talk about endings, transitions, and beginnings. As Leadership spent time looking back at Lake Ridge over the past year, the stories we were sharing and things we were celebrating could best be described as beginnings, or new growth. That's both encouraging, and perhaps also a reminder of the promise written in love by our great God who can redeem all things.

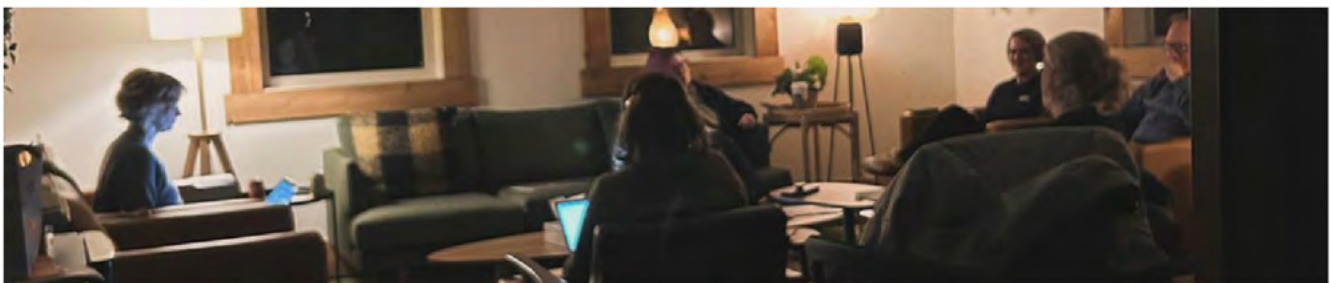
In Isaiah 43:19 it is written: *For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. As we look back at 2023, we see this promise fulfilled. We definitely had wilderness as we walked through transitions in our youth leadership and said farewell to our transitional Leader Shane Pearsall, and there were definitely fumbles and hard things along that path, but we can see that God walked through it all with us.*

Two areas of new beginnings stand out as celebrations for me. First, the growth in our ministry space. Last year, we headed into the fall ministry season with a series of intentional conversations with ministry leaders where we talked about both dreams for different ministry areas, and also realities. As a community of ministry leaders, plans were made to address challenges and conversations were had about both what we needed from the church community and also what we could offer people who came through our doors. All those conversations culminated in the September Ministry Fair, the first in Lake Ridge's history. The good work done in the fall set the groundwork for rich planning conversations as we moved into the budget process for the coming year. What a blessing to see people leaning in and tackling this work together. Our ministry team leaders are definitely part of God's 'pathway through the wilderness.'

The second area of new beginnings worth celebrating has to do with our staff team. When our lead pastor resigned in 2022, as Leadership, we immediately began thinking about what a new organization might look like. But, we were committed to moving slowly and making space for the things that would grow through the ambiguity of transition. In 2023, we commissioned Preston as 'Pastor,' a humble title filled with potential, and together we have been learning what it means to have a 'pastor', and what support needs to be in place to allow Preston to be his very best in this role. At the end of 2023, we hired Victoria McKinnon as our Church Life Coordinator, with the goal of resourcing the consistent administrative support necessary to help projects, events, and systems come to life. We also added Michelle Hunt to the team as our Bookkeeper, and she's been handling all our record keeping with an intentional commitment to documenting the details we will need to answer future questions. With Jennifer Kasur caring for our Kids Ministry, and Christina Yanew as a steady hand facilitating logistics on Sunday morning, we've got a good team ready for all that God has planned for Lake Ridge. Indeed, 'God has already begun.'

As we look back at 2023 we can see God's new beginnings in many different places. Signs of new growth require tending – without care and intention, tender new beginnings can fail. So, for 2024, rather than identify our theme after it happens by looking backwards, Leadership and the Ministry Leaders are challenging ourselves to look forwards and set an intention that we feel God is calling us to. In 2024, your Leadership and Ministry Leaders have committed to considering how the concept of 'Care' might shape our church. There aren't deep and detailed plans on what this means at this point, but I hope you'll notice this intention as it takes shape in many different spaces. And I hope you'll join us – as God creates a pathway, he may be calling you to participate. You would be welcome.

Leadership Chair – Andrea Conway



# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

# Report

*"... It is God who makes things grow...The one who plants and the one who waters have the same purpose. The Lord will give each of them a reward for their work. We work together to serve God... You are like his building... But each one should build carefully. No one can lay any other foundation than what has already been laid. That foundation is Jesus Christ" 1 Corinthians 3:7-11*

This verse is one I continually reflect on each year as I write this report. I feel it speaks to the heart of ministry and is the core of what I hope our kids at Lake Ridge take in as they learn, build relationships and grow in Christ. There are many voices and distractions in the world fighting for their attention. My hope is that, as a church community and followers of Christ, we can become a healthy example of planters and waterers to these kids, teaching them truth and showing them love and remembering God is the one who makes things grow.

2023 was an eventful year. In February, we received a generous donation from the Varico Foundation, where 40+ Bibles were given to each child in grades 2 to 7. These Bibles contain an amazing resource called the "Filament App" which allows each child to access (using the code in their bibles) many resources such as devotionals, studies and videos to help in their personal faith building! This year we made it a priority to teach the kids how to use their Bibles and find verses during our time together in Kids Church. We also spent several months learning the song "Books of the Bible" where many kids learned the 66 books of the Bible just by singing (myself included!).

Our curriculum focus this past year was learning about Jesus, our identity in Him and how He lived out what He taught through the parables. We also learned about the Armour of God and the importance of protecting our heart, mind and what we expose them to. We learned together through worship, object lessons, games and crafts. We tried something new this summer, partnering with 5-Day Clubs, a program administered through the Child Evangelism Fellowship, where kids gathered for five days in July (in the Kasur backyard) learning new songs, memorizing scripture, earning prizes and listening to stories taught by a lovely volunteer from Saskatchewan named Anna.

An important focus this year is creating intergenerational connections. One way we have been doing this is by having Family Sundays once a month. These are intentional services where kids join the adults in the main service where they worship together to music and teachings curated to all generations. We believe it is important for kids to experience what it's like to participate in a regular service, while connecting with all generations. Easter and Christmas are two examples this year where the kids performed songs for the congregation, playing an important role in the service. We hope to provide more opportunities for kids to be involved in future services.

Some of our focus this upcoming year includes teaching kids to memorize scripture and creating more opportunities for kids to serve inside and outside the church. We are also excited to have more Bible experiences with the kids this year such as having a passover meal together!

I am grateful for all the planters and waterers that have walked alongside me this year. The staff, the teachers, the helpers, the youth volunteers, the prayer team and the encouragers. Thank you for all the love and care you show towards our beautiful kids of Lakeridge. May 2024 be a year of growth for our kids and for us as a church.

Children's Ministry Leader - Jennifer Kasur





# YOUTH MINISTRY

# Report

## **Reflecting on the past year, what is a beginning or a first for your ministry?**

One significant event that stood out as Lake Ridge's new youth leaders in the past year was the first parents meeting that took place in March. The rally of all the concerned parents and the leaders that got together in that room was a testament to how important our Youth are to our church family. From that moment forward, we have had families, mentors, and our greater church family come alongside our youth that continued to attend, and we have seen a change, and especially growth.

## **Tell us what your ministry has done this year?**

- The In Between Space has 18 consistent junior high and senior high teens attending where we are committed to teaching, growing and providing a safe space for our teens with Christ as the centre.
- In the fall, we completed Alpha, which had 15 teenagers move through a series of reflections that helped, challenged and grew our teens. In the wind-up event, it was amazing to see God's movement through the Holy Spirit within the group through conversation and personal reflective time.
- We were able to do 10 fun events and 2 youth rallies that brought an average of 20 youth together in a fun atmosphere. Our largest event was Activate in January with an attendance of 26 youth.

## **Where have you seen God at work in Lake Ridge and in Chestermere?**

Building a connection with the youth through the amazing conversations that are going deeper within the group as a trust has been established. As we develop and create our youth ministry team, it is evident that God has brought this group together. It is a team that is committed to share God's love, creating a safe space on Thursday nights and at our fun events. We are committed to learn more about each individual teen through training and prayer. As a result, our youth are feeling comfortable enough with the leaders to begin inviting their friends to the youth events.

## **Reflecting**

We are excited to see growth in our teenagers in the coming year as we move deeper in our knowledge in Christ. With that growth, we hope to see our numbers grow at the In Between Space and we hope that our teens become a catalyst of change in our city. We pray that as our teenagers age out of the program, that they are active in faith in the places where God sends them into adulthood. We are excited to see our team of mentors grow to encourage our teens during this season of their lives. Overall, the past year of rebuild has been encouraging and we are looking forward to what God has in store for our teens this coming year.

Youth Ministry Leaders - Luke Meyers & Megan Desplanque





# J.O.Y. MINISTRY

# Report

## ***Greetings Lake Ridge Church***

Our Seniors Group, now called J.O.Y. Group (Just Older Youth), meets every second Wednesday of the month at Camp Chestermere. We meet in the Living Room from 2 to 4 P.M. We are a group of older members 55+. We met at a private residence prior to now but hoped that with the move to the camp more people would be likely to join us.

Our group started up five years ago, just to meet and have coffee and tea, getting to know each other. We celebrate birthdays and other occasions in our lives and pray for each other. We enjoy each others company. We are people from various cultures, nationalities and backgrounds. We marvel at times how God has brought us all together at Lake Ridge, awesome I would say.

At present we have 11 regular members. Steve King, one of our starting members has gone to be with his Lord and Mani has returned to Sri Lanka. Various neighbors and friends have visited us and we are always open to visitors and others joining us. We discuss various topics, issues and pass on information from the community.

Please join and visit with us when you are able. Coffee and tea are on and sometimes goodies. You will find a warm welcome.

## ***Ladies Bible Study***

The Ladies Bible Study met for the first time on February 28 at the Living Room at Camp Chestermere. We will meet the last Wednesday of the month from 1:30 – 3:00 P.M.

Four ladies attended with four more letting us know they were interested. Our group discussed Psalm 42 from our prayer Lent booklet. Next meeting we will be discussing Genesis chapters 1 and 2. We encouraged each other to bring in articles we read and Bible verses to discuss. Come and join us ladies, you will certainly be welcome.

J.O.Y. Ministry Leaders ~ Bill & Nel Schoonderbeek



# PRAYER MINISTRY

# Report

Reflecting on this past year as a Prayer Ministry leader was an encouraging time. It was only at our last year's AGM that our growing desire to be a pray-first church was nurtured into an official ministry. The past year has seen beautiful growth within our church community and we have been extremely blessed by all of the encouraging words received since kicking off this ministry.

Seeing prayer become a priority during our Sunday morning church services has been wonderful. Through it, we have been able to hear from our church family and partner with them in carrying each other's burdens and praises. We have seen and heard of ways that God continues to surprise us and it has allowed us to provide another level of care for our congregation and our neighbours.

Our monthly Prayer Evenings at Camp Chestermere were another first, born out of the desire to care for each other well. These evenings have been a time of spiritual growth, but the friendships that have deepened through them have been incredible to witness, too. Our desire was to create a space where believers of all levels could learn about prayer, ask difficult questions and grow in faith, and we have witnessed fruit in every one of those areas.

As we look forward to the year ahead, we are excited for all the ways that God will continue to surprise us. One of our goals is to establish a Sunday Morning prayer space available for our guests who would like one on one prayer following the service. We also hope to see growth in our Prayer Evening time, not only by the number of friends we have joining us, but through the development of confidence in prayer for everyone who attends. We are hopeful that through these practices, our entire Lake Ridge family would grow in healthy prayer habits.

We are so grateful for the support of this ministry, and trust that as we walk in it together, we will be walking with Jesus.

Prayer Ministry Leaders - Victoria McKinnon & Christina Yanew





# WORSHIP MINISTRY

# Report

It's 7:30 pm on a winter's night. The sun has long set to the west. The sound of whirring machinery signals the imminent arrival of our final team member. The door clicks, and out another comes from the elevator, with instrument in hand: we're all here.

You can hear the sound of good-natured, affable conversation between plugging in and soundchecks and hugs. We're in the Higdon's upper room after all: of course there are hugs. We pray and tune and flip through the set list for the upcoming Sunday. We begin our practice, quietly at first as our fingers and our voices catch up. Then louder and synchronizing. Soon we're warmed up and on the same page.

Each song we tackle is better than the last. The team is on a roll now, and everyone is beginning to give it their all. Even though we are mic'd and the room is at least 90 dB, we're singing at the top of our lungs. It's hot. It's loud. And all of us know that the Holy Spirit has come to enter into worship with us. It's wonderful.

We finish but nobody wants the evening to end. Is it 9 o'clock already? Finally we start packing up and make the elevator trip in the reverse direction. With hoarse voices and big smiles we depart back to our families, knowing that something special has happened here tonight. If you were there that night, you'll understand.

This is why we worship.

Those who are a part of our worship team have amazing amazing stories like this to tell, worship is a passion for us. We are hopeful so many others will join our small but passionate worship team. Jesus said, *"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."* We are praying for more people to join with us. Resourcing the worship ministry has unique challenges: there are specialized musical skills that worship team members need, and a passion to share them. It's a calling.

Our work this year is to build a sustainable worship team and we need your help. Please encourage our team, consider joining and serving with us, and please pray for us as we lead our community in worship. Thank you, Lake Ridge, we look forward to lifting up our hearts together this Sunday.

Worship Ministry Leaders - Chris Kupchenko & Kate Ager



# ATMOSPHERE MINISTRY *Report*

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In the past year, the Tech and newly formed Atmosphere Teams of our church have worked diligently to make plans to enhance the worship experience for our congregation. Some of those have already been accomplished.

The Tech Team has successfully implemented new visual equipment, capabilities, and software upgrades to ensure smooth execution of our services. We replaced our overhead projector and made enhancements to the programming we use on Sunday mornings. We brought back the use of the big light stands and have begun training a few members of our youth on how to run those on Sunday mornings.

The Atmosphere Team has begun making changes around the church, painting the storage carts, rearranging welcome tables and Kids Church check-in station, and painting and relabelling all the sandwich boards. While small to start, most of their work has been behind the scenes planning for the future. The Atmosphere Team has already purchased some of the items to create a prayer corner for the Prayer Ministry on Sunday mornings. They have long term plans for beautifully decorating our church space for worship on Sundays and for special events and holidays, creating a welcoming and inspiring environment for all who enter.

The dedication and creativity of these teams has begun to truly transform our worship services and events, leading to increased engagement and participation from our church members. As we look ahead to the next year, we are excited to continue building on these successes and finding new ways to enhance the worship experience for our community that contributes to our desire to create a sanctuary space in a school gymnasium, while looking forward to an eventual permanent space.

Community Connection Coordinator ~ Christina Yanew





# HOSPITALITY MINISTRY *Report*

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## **Tarynn**

In the Summer of 2023, I was able to return to the Coffee Ministry team after a year away, and was joined by a new co-leader, Jacinda. A lot had changed in that year, but Lake Ridge feeling like home was not one of them. I was happy to come back to this role and it took about 5 minutes to see what a perfect fit Jacinda was to help lead this team. She has such a passion for God, hospitality and people (and a love of baking that we have all had the pleasure of enjoying on a Sunday morning!) that she has been a huge blessing to the coffee ministry.

## **Jacinda**

In Summer 2023, I was asked to join the coffee ministry and I was a little unsure until I met Tarynn. She has been a wonderful mentor and has shown me how to run the ministry effectively, but always keeping the focus on the hearts of people. She has this amazing ability to make potluck and hot dog Sundays look effortless and we are so blessed to have her.

## **From us!**

We kicked off September with a Potluck, and have made Hot Dog Sundays a month-end event. We were pleasantly surprised to find that Hot Dog Sundays have quickly become a favourite day, as we love watching people stay and gather and connect with one another, and we are reminded again that our team is truly about creating a space for connection. The coffee breaks allow for the introduction and the hot dogs allow for the deepening of the relationships. One thing we truly appreciate on our team are the members that specialize in gluten-free baking. We see faces light up when there are gluten-free options and people don't have to miss out on connection time because they can't participate in the sharing of a meal.

We have a special vantage point in the coffee ministry (from the back of the room) to see God is growing the Lake Ridge community. We see new faces come in for the first time, start to connect at the coffee stand, and we see them return in following weeks. We see people come every week as their authentic selves, just as they are, to be loved and to love others as they are. We see all the ministries working with intention to genuinely care for this church and all who come through the doors. And we see a Pastor that truly has a heart full of love for this community. In 2024, we look forward to watching the church continue to grow and reach out into Chestermere. May we take the heart of hospitality into our streets and love our neighbours the way we love on Sunday.

Coffee Ministry Leaders ~ Tarynn James & Jacinda Kauenhofen



# CONNECTIONS MINISTRY *Report*

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Well, Lake Ridge, we put out the call and you answered. I am so excited to welcome enough new members to our team to once again be "fully staffed". This was no small undertaking and Christina was key to our success (thank you!). I am thrilled to be rolling out the Connections team in its entirety for the first time since Covid. Now, you can truly be welcomed in style!

My goal is to ensure that every single person walking through the door on Sunday morning feels warm hospitality and welcome. Especially when new folks come to check us out, I want to be sure they leave feeling loved.

I have seen this happening. So many warm conversations, hearty handshakes, and squishy hugs get exchanged every single Sunday and I am here for it. I have seen faces light up and moods lift and I just know God is present among our people. I am excited for more new folks to journey through our doors and experience the Lake Ridge welcome!

My heart swells every time I see people being truly seen and loved. Whether you've been with Lake Ridge since the beginning, or are tentatively walking through the doors of the school for the first time, I want you to feel at home. As Bon Jovi sings, "Welcome to wherever you are" and I believe we are doing an exceptional job of meeting people where they are at and making sure they know they are important and valued and loved.

Connection Ministry Leader - Lisa Klemmensen







January 2024

Dear members and friends of the Evangelical Covenant Church of Canada,

We have much to be thankful for as we enter this new year! As your church gathers for its Annual Meeting, I trust that it offers a great time for you to give thanks for God's faithfulness in 2023 and to affirm the direction of your community in the year to come. What a gift to join God and one another on mission across Canada and around the world!

The Canada Covenant leadership board and I are thankful for your continued partnership in our shared work: churches, camps, initiatives, and ministries all play a significant role in advancing God's Kingdom from Montreal to Vancouver. [Together, we START and STRENGTHEN churches... SERVE and SUPPORT pastors and leaders.](#) I am encouraged by growing signs of health and hope across Canada and around the world.

We hope you have a chance to see the impact of our shared mission and ministry through the hope-filled stories we share. If you're not already subscribed to our Canada Covenant email list, or able to see the missional stories we're sharing on our Instagram and Facebook channels, we'd love to help you get connected. Please email us at [office@covchurch.ca](mailto:office@covchurch.ca). **We are grateful for the good things God is up to through our movement.**

Over the last three years, we have sought to be sensitive to the capacity and needs of all of our churches and the pace of our shared mission together. This past Fall, the Leadership Board continued a 12-month conversation discerning the Canada Covenant's vision for the future. We'll be sharing more of this vision as 2024 unfolds, but [two significant aspects of this vision are: a commitment to plant 30 churches in the next 10 years and the commitment to experiment with six regional Stronger Together events to serve as our annual meeting.](#) On May 4th, we'll gather across the country, from east to west, in Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Alberta, the Kootenays, and the Lower Mainland. We're excited to see how God will encourage you and your churches through this experiment. A letter has been sent to your leadership and more details will be coming soon.

We are grateful for God's work through your church and our movement.

In prayer with and for you,

Glenn Peterson

President/Superintendent, Evangelical Covenant Church of Canada



DECEMBER 2023

### *Hello Covenant Family,*

Thank you for the many ways you have been partnering and praying with me and the Covenant denominational team this year. I send each of you my gratitude and thanks! We have been through a significant season of change and are just at the beginning of living into a new ministry structure. It is my hope and prayer that these changes will allow us to resource and partner with you more intentionally as together we join God in God's mission to see more disciples among more populations in a more caring and just world.

Please know that our denominational team is praying for you too! Each of our ministry teams has selected a regional conference to pray for this year. If you would like to send your prayer requests, we would love to receive them. We want you to know there is a concerted effort to lift you up in prayer. This is one of the many ways we can live into our Three Strand Strong commitment. I pray our good and faithful God will provide for all your needs and amplify the many ways you demonstrate the love of Christ in word and deed in your community. I pray you will be encouraged even when circumstances are challenging, knowing that God is always at work. I pray the joy of the Lord will be your strength.

The psalmist writes, "Your love, O Lord, forever will I sing; from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness" (Psalm 89:1). It is an honor, privilege, and joy to serve the Evangelical Covenant Church. This past year has been full of experiencing God's faithfulness to his beloved church; from the wonderful church anniversaries being celebrated to 100 years of the gospel coming to the Democratic Republic of Congo, God has been faithful. What a magnificent God we serve! Please continue to share your stories of how God is at work in and through your congregation with us. We love to celebrate these stories with you. They are a gift and encouragement to the whole church! Looking forward, I am excited to see how God will meet our youth as they gather for Unite 2024. I know there will be new and renewed commitments to Christ as well as responses to God's call to ministry and service.

I pray every blessing upon each of you this Advent and Christmas season. As you gather in your local church annual meetings, may you reflect and marvel at God's faithfulness to you this year.

*For God's glory and neighbor's good,*

**Tammy Swanson-Draheim**, PRESIDENT, EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH