

**Trinity Lutheran Church**  
**Church Council Meeting Minutes – January 12, 2021**  
**Reporting: Bev Pillers**

**Present:** Marc Bachman, Cathy Carlson, Andy Elofson, Brian Fell, Scott Fichtner, Nancy Kruger, Doug Minter, Sarah Nelsen, Bev Pillers, Barbara Simpson, Pastor Joy Ekstedt, Pastor Nikoli Falenschek

**Absent:** Alie Hermanson

The meeting was called to order. Devotion was given by Sarah Nelsen.

The agenda for the meeting was accepted by unanimous consent.

The minutes of the January Council meeting were approved by unanimous consent.

**A. Business Discussed:**

**1. Pastor Joy's Report**

- Thank you to returning and new Council members.
- Will visit with the Executive Committee about moving the Committee -Council Retreat to May. Review Committee-Council Covenant.
- Continue to meet with colleagues in the SW MN Synod via Zoom for Minnesota Valley Conference meetings and synod meetings.
- Grace Street Bible Study meets two times per month. Enjoy the conversations with the group!
- Participating in the 2021 Simpson Forum (Jan 20-Feb 10). The speakers have been great!
- Endowment Committee met. A team has been formed to reconsider the process of requesting endowment funds.
- Create videos every other week for 5-6grade and 7-8grade confirmation students and parents to hopefully shed some light on their lesson for the week. Having a great time thinking of ways to connect with the kids through those videos.
- The Health Response Team has had conversations about revamping the 3 phase plan (red-yellow-green) to a plan based on trends upward or downward rather than infection rate numbers reported by the Minnesota Department of Health. Most likely will go to a 2 phase plan. The plan is ready for Council to discuss and vote on.
- Plans are being made for Ash Wednesday service February 17 at 7 pm. If the HRT changes the plan that's currently in use, services could be in person with limited capacity, as well as on Facebook live. Midweek services for Lent could also be under the new two phase plan
- TLC packages (Wine and cup for Communion) are being received well by those homebound. The Worship Committee has a plan to replenish them February 11-13, available for delivery or pickup. The package will also include a small container of ashes for the Ash Wednesday service.
- Been meeting with Kristie and Pastor Nikoli for conversation about a number of things as she becomes acquainted with TLC and her position.
- Last year's plan for a sabbatical was postponed to the summer of 2021. Visiting with TLC Companions about their interest in serving as lay leaders – continuing their contacts and serving Communion to people (following our policy for home visits).
- Pastor Joy brought Council member's attention to the Covenant that Council members agree to that has been in use for many years. She will send it out to the members. Items covered were the need for council members to attend all meetings, give notice if not able to attend, be knowledgeable about items on the agenda, practice respectful disagreement, among others. She asked us to review the Covenant. We will discuss further at the retreat in the future.

**2. Pastor Nikoli's Report**

- CYF: Working hard, in collaboration with Kristie and the CYF team to build towards getting our kiddos back to in-person programming, both safely and meaningfully. Pending tonight's meeting and council decisions, we are ready to implement a return to the sanctuary for Confirmation and HS Youth Group. We will take the next two weeks to spread the word, train the volunteers, and develop details for Confirmation, but hopefully we'll be in the Sanctuary this coming Sunday, the 14th.

We're also hopeful that we can find an easy and safe way to turn the weekly Sunday School Zoom into an in-person activity in the sanctuary.

- **Communion Classes:** You'll remember that we decided to open up the Communion Table to younger worshippers at Trinity, in keeping with our mission to mirror the welcome of Christ. Immediately after that, just as we were getting into Lent and the schedule for those Communion classes, the Covid pandemic hit our country and congregation. Not only were the classes put on hold, but even the practice of the Sacrament itself was delayed for the next six months. As we return to the season of Lent, and as we've once again started practicing this Sacrament, I'm hopeful that we'll be able to resume these classes, K-6th grade. How these classes will happen depends on our conversations tonight about the Covid response plan. It will most likely be a mixture of in-person and virtual gatherings. The 4-6th graders would engage more with three or four classes, and the K-3 graders would engage less with two or three classes. I'm still working on creating a unique way for these diners to be recognized at worship.
- **Summer Programming:** It's such a wonderful gift to have Kristie on board to help with the leg work in getting summer programming up and running. She has modified a past invention of her own—a local service/mission week—into a plan for an entire week of local stuff for our 5-12 graders this summer, in lieu of traveling to YouthWorks or Christikon. I'm excited to be able to focus more time than I have in the past toward generating faith practices, resources, worships, and themes for these offerings.
- **Continuing Education:** Both Kristie and I were able to tune in to the ELCA Youth Ministry Network's Extravaganza, which is the most acclaimed and resourceful event of the year for children and youth workers in the ELCA. This is an annual event, which happened on Zoom this year on Thursday-Saturday of last week. The worship services were inspiring and creative, the breakouts were really mind-expanding and skill-developing, and reconnecting with colleagues and friends was life-giving. Kristie and I are excited to bring ideas and learnings to our work here at TLC.
- **Tragedies:** We've unfortunately encountered a couple of extremely sad deaths: Robert Pillers and Dustin Wiley. Four of our youngest people were deeply effected by these deaths, and so I met with these families separately to talk about death and grief with the kids. Two of these kids lost their grandpa at the dinner table while they were eating; two of these kids lost their dad in a snowmobile accident. I feel blessed to have been invited to care for these kids and their families pastorally in such a tough time. I led the funeral and graveside service for Dustin Wiley a few weekends ago.
- **SPAF:** I have taken over the volunteer scheduling work for the board at the food shelf and will be attending our quarterly board meeting next week. I have a number of questions to bring with me from the Mission Team, who remain dedicated to supporting that public ministry.
- **Green Lake Ministries Annual Board meeting** was today. They are projecting a strong outdoor ministry in 2021. They have gained over 350 donors over the last year, with many making over \$1,000 donations. On February 21 they will meet with our families via Zoom

### 3. Treasurer's Report

- Offerings for January were \$30,961. This is down \$1,090 January 2020 (a non-pandemic month)
- Total expenses in January were \$37,898. This is a deficit of \$6,936 for the month
- The January budgeted amount was \$44,902 so expenses were actually under the budgeted amount by \$7,004
- The Bank Balance at the end of January was \$100,874.
- The Controlled Savings Balance was \$106,275.

### 4. Committee Reports

- **Endowment Committee:** Sarah Nelsen has chosen Darrell Jodock as the President's designee for the Endowment Committee. The committee has requested that we appoint Al Hewitt as the Endowment Trustee on the Endowment Committee. **See Action Item #1**
- **Personnel Committee:** HSA new hire: ELCA has different plans for benefits for staff. We have had for several years the option for an HSA. We traditionally pay out the annual amount at the beginning of the year for those eligible. Kristie Olson, recently hired, is covered by her parents' health

coverage. A motion was made to pay out to Kristie her annual health care benefits. **See Action Item #2**

- Property Committee: Had discussion at their committee meeting about reopening the church. The Sanctuary is able to be used at reduced occupation levels. The Gustafson Fellowship Hall needs a couple of things done to improve ventilation. Classrooms in the Education wing can't be used. The chair of the committee will be meeting with IGS for more information regarding the report on a study they made several months ago about our ventilation
- Community Life: The committee met this week. Over the holidays they did a reading of Christmas stories. They are looking at what they can do virtually. They are also checking with other congregations to see what they are doing virtually.
- Children, Youth and Family: They are working on a plan to bring youth back into the sanctuary for Confirmation and Sunday School. Kristie is planning a mission week with middle and high schoolers this summer. They are researching partnering with First Lutheran for summer activities, to include VBS. Kids made Valentine cards for homebound members.
- Worship, Music and Arts: Working on the Light and Love project for Palm Sunday. This coming Sunday they will be delivering TLC Communion packages.
- Mission: Pastor Nikoli is on the board of the Food Shelf. They have been talking about how the perceived culture of the Food Shelf can be changed. Attendance is down at the Food Shelf but is up for the monthly community food pick up site. They are working on an idea for serving meals to the people in the senior apartments next door. They are also looking at food distribution for those in need.
- Adult Education: The Simpson Forum has gone well and was well attended. They would like to find a way to make use of the recordings of this year's forum. When services commence in the building, the adult sunday school class will be able to meet at 10:45. A program is ready to use when classes begin.
- Stewardship: The committee met and are looking at what the Stewardship program has been working on in the past and what they might do in the future. They have several openings on their committee to be filled..

## 6. Health Response Team

- A three phase plan has been in place determining when services and activities can be held in the building. There have been changes in the Minnesota Health Department (MHD) guidelines for schools looking at trends rather than numbers. The Health Response Team recommends revising our plan to a two phase plan, red and green, with red closing the building to use and green allowing specific parts of the building for use. It's recommended by the Health Response Team that we move from the 3 phase plan to a more flexible plan for operation that is based on trends in case rates, current St. Peter School District learning delivery method, current recommendations from the MN Department of Health, and applicable Governor's Orders.
- They have also made a Covid-19 Preparedness Plan required by MHD. Guidelines are for 50% capacity, face masks, 6 ft. social distancing, etc.
  - We're presently in yellow under the current plan. We would be in green under the new plan because the trend presently is going downward.
  - With this plan we would be able to start in-person church services and look to Council members to participate, if able, as ushers and other duties.
  - The Health Response Team will continue meeting monthly, watching trends and keeping us informed.
  - Who makes the call of when to go back to red? Recommendation would come from the Health Response Team to Council. Council would have to meet quickly to have that conversation and make a decision.
  - Building use will be scheduled by Jen H and Kristin in the office. We are limited to the Sanctuary and Gustafson Fellowship Hall for use. We will not have building rental at this time. They are working on acquiring software to use for scheduling so the building is not yet available to schedule for occupancy.

- There are many forces coming at us such as other variants so we will need to act quickly if the trend reverses. The Health Response Team felt that with precautions we are taking, it should be OK to use the building now, but be able to pivot quickly.
- This is an opportunity to remind groups that food and drink are not allowed at this time.
- Council approved the 2 phase plan and for areas of the building determined by ISG as having adequate ventilation, to include the sanctuary and the Gustafson Fellowship Hall, be available for use. **See Action Item 3**
- In the Covid-19 Preparedness document Pastor Joy would like struck, the sentences under Building and Ventilation Protocol: *The church building’s ventilation system has been assessed. Some areas have better ventilation than others.* She would like them replaced with **‘The building’s ventilation system has been assessed and in ISG’s review determined we had adequate ventilation in the sanctuary and the Gustafson Fellowship Hall, therefore they are available for use.’**
- Pastor Joy also would like to strike the sentence: *Steps are also being taken to minimize air flow blowing across people.*
- Council approved the Covid-19 Preparedness document with these edits. **See Action Item #4.**

7. **Bank Accounts:** A resolution was made that Scott Fichtner, Treasurer and Sarah Nelsen, Church Council President, be added as authorized signers for our accounts at First National Bank, St. Peter, MN See Action Item #5.
8. **Lent Offerings:** Discussion was held as to what organization to designate the Wednesday night services offering. Council would like to split the offering between Green Lake Lutheran Ministries and a local organization that is giving Covid aid to small businesses. They have tabled the issue until research can be done to find an organization giving such aid to businesses.
9. **Announcements:** A document will be sent out to be filled in by Council members for the two positions needed fro assistance at services. It will include a sign up sheet for devotions at our Council meetings.

**B. Actions Taken:**

1. Motion was made to appoint Al Hewitt as the Endowment Trustee on the Endowment Committee. M/S/P
2. Motion was made that the HSA contribution to Kristie Olson be paid out annually as is the custom with other employees. M/S/P
3. Motion was made to adopt the two phase paln to open the building when in the green pahast eto areas ISG found in thir review to have adequate ventialation; the sanctuary and the Gustafson Fellowship Hall. M/S/P
4. Motion was made to adopt the Covid-19 Preparedness Plan created by the Health Response Team outlining guidelines on health safety measures with agreed upon edits. M/S/P
5. Resolution was made by Council that it be resolved that Scott Fichtner, Treasurer and Sarah Nelsen, Church Council President, be added as authorized signers for our accounts at First National Bank, St. Peter, MN. M/S/P
6. Motion was made to accept the Executive committee’s recommendation to approve appointment of Committee Members. Finance-Avery Bachman, Stewardship-Tim Kennedy, Personnel Committee –Joel Darge, Wendy Bachman, Dave Arpin, Deb Fichtner. M/S/P

**C. Responsibilities Assigned:** none

**D. Next meeting:** March 9, 2021 at 6:30 pm.

30-60-90

**February**

Feb 3, 10 The Simpson Forum  
 Feb 17 Ash Wednesday (7pm service)  
 Feb 24 Lenten Service (7pm)

**March**

Mar 3, 10, 17, 24 Lenten Services (Âpm)

Mar 28

Palm Sunday

**April**

Apr 1 Maundy Thursday  
 Apr 2 Good Friday  
 Apr 4 Easter  
 Apr 5 Offices Closed