

Trinity Lutheran Church
Church Council Meeting Minutes – May 11, 2021
Reporting: Jennifer Hubrig

Present: Marc Bachman, Cathy Carlson, Andy Elofson, Brian Fell, Alie Hermanson, Nancy Kruger, Doug Minter, Sarah Nelsen, Barbara Simpson, Pastor Joy Ekstedt, Pastor Nikoli Falenschek

Absent: Scott Fichtner

The agenda for the meeting was accepted by unanimous consent.

A. Business Discussed:

1. Pastor Joy's Report

- Last year, I brought together a team of people to serve as TLC Companions who made calls to our homebound members during a year of isolation. The natural step, while I'm on sabbatical, is to expand this team in number and mission. I am delighted to say we have 13 people who are available to visit our homebound members this summer and serve Holy Communion at those visits. I will have contact with our homebound members before I leave on sabbatical.
- Have had contact with a number of congregations who have recently finished building projects/renovations. I will share that information with the Property Committee as we consider the needs of our congregation.
- Led the 4-6 grade First Communion classes – with the exception of the week I was on vacation. Had a great time with the kids and their parents, who were meeting in-person and virtually. The blessing for these kids will be held over a number of Sundays.
- Affirmation of Baptism was May 2 and was a great Sunday—even though it was yet one more event that was different from “the way we have always done it.” Even so, it was great to witness these young people affirm their faith.
- Grace Street Bible Study is now meeting in-person at Trinity. We have great conversations on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month at 10:30 am. All are welcome!
- Met with the Health Response Team. Again, I am so grateful for their time and dedication to keeping our congregation, friends, and family healthy and safe. We will now meet “as needed.”
- Met with Anti-racism team April 20. Discussed plans for a June event and also made plans to meet in advance of May 16 when a video message from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton will be part of the worship service. I am grateful, too, for the dedication and passion of this team.
- Met with Endowment Committee.
- Prepared and submitted an endowment request for a gift from TLC to be given to Gifts of Grace in honor of Bishop Jon Anderson's 18 years of service to our synod and the larger church. Bishop Anderson is not seeking re-election at the 2021 SW MN Synod Assembly. See other notes in the council report regarding this gift.
- Prepared and submitted an endowment request for my sabbatical expenses. That request included what I intend to do during that sabbatical. After thinking, thinking, and thinking even more, I have chosen to read books on various topics, including stewardship, Christian leadership, and spirituality by Henri Nouwen, a Catholic priest. I also have considered at length places to go to “get away” but it's challenging because of limits due to the pandemic. I am considering places near lakes where I have loved to spend time. A sabbatical is meant to be both a time of learning and restoration. I hope to bring out of this sabbatical a deeper understanding of generosity and to be spiritually, physically, and mentally renewed. I believe this is the best plan for my sabbatical time as we come out of a year of upheaval. Additionally, I have the honor of officiating at my cousin's daughter's wedding while I'm on sabbatical -- the end of June. It will be a great celebration and family reunion!
- Met with Kristen, Jen, Kristie and Pastor Nikoli about church management software. We came to the decision that everyone is fine with and have committed to using it for the next two years.
- Met with Pastor Nikoli about things he plans and hopes to be doing while I am on sabbatical. We will meet for more conversation. I expressed to him that summer is also a time for him to be renewed and to catch his breath. The plan is to have pulpit supply about 5 times while I am gone.

That would keep the preaching schedule close to our regular schedule (preaching responsibilities every other week).

- Will be leading a private memorial service for Vern Olmanson May 22.
- Will be putting a letter together with council regarding plans for the summer and fall.
- See you before I leave for sabbatical or when I return August 17!

2. Pastor Nikoli's Report

- Church Management Software: Our current church management software is woefully inadequate for a congregation our size and of our activity. Spearheaded by Jen, the office staff are exploring options for a new software that would be capable of more deeply connecting the staff to the congregation, and also amongst the congregation. A new software would unite the many functions that we're currently using 3rd-party sites for. Depending on which software we choose, we'd be able to integrate the following (the actual list is very long, but these are what I'm most excited for):
 - Manage online giving (admins and parishioners alike)
 - Access documents (group and general)
 - Sort people into groups, who can then communicate directly with each other
 - Create needs lists for events (potlucks, fundraisers, volunteers, etc.)
 - Communicate directly with subsets of people (always up-to-date lists)
 - Registrations and forms directly through profiles (parents would only have to register their kid ONCE a year, and we'd already have the contact info so would just need policy agreements, releases, etc. each year)
 - Electronic Directory (update on their own or through office, printable, accessible via apps and smart devices, upload own photos, etc.)
 - Scheduling Tools (easily control privileges for various calendars, facility requests, technology requests, etc.)
 - Establish automated protocols—example:
 - a visitor leaves contact information—> Jen creates new personal profile—> Pr Joy or Pr Nikoli is prompted to get in touch with visitor depending on optional fields like “interested in Sunday School” or “want more information”—> Pr Joy or Pr Nikoli again prompted six weeks later to get back in touch with visitor —> Pastor or Committee chairs are prompted to get in touch with visitor on specific dates (ex. CYF chair to contact visitor in August regarding Sunday School)
- Continuing Ed Reminder: I'm going to be unavailable May 17-21, as I will be attending the Festival of Homiletics (i.e. preaching) virtually.
- Confirmation Sunday: I'm so grateful to our 9th graders for their resilience and persistence, and to their families for taking our covid protocols and capacities in stride. Many, obviously, were less than pleased with the numbers to which we had to restrict our guest lists, but on the actual day the vibe was overwhelmingly positive, affirming, and grateful. I was so proud to be a part of that blessing!
- Confirmation Program: We concluded our year with an amazing party at the church! Between various crafts, sidewalk art, yard games, and a surprisingly popular dance party in the sanctuary, we had a great time together. Again, I'm just so grateful to the kids and their leaders for finding enough extra energy to participate in this program above and beyond the stresses already placed on them at home, at school, and wherever else demanding their time.
- Funeral Services: I was honored to conduct the graveside service for Lynda Nygard and her brother Richard Hanson on April 22.
- First Communion: We have now completed all of the Communion Instruction for the 1st—6th graders. We also recorded all of those classes so that those who missed one or two can learn at home. Plus, if anyone missed the memo completely and wants to Commune before the next set of classes, we'll have a resource to share with them! Those Communion Blessings will begin May 9 @ 11am and will continue May 23 (11am), May 30 (9:30am), and June 13 (9:30am).
- Baccalaureate Service: We will celebrate the achievements of and bless our graduating seniors on May 23 @ 7pm. The sewing ladies have set aside some awesome quilts which will be chosen specifically for each graduate by their parents/guardians.

- Synod Assembly: We are still looking for a male, lay representative to attend the virtual Assembly on June 6th, 11th, and 12th. **We need that person to be registered by May 17th!!**
- Bonfire Worship: 7pm on June 23, July 14, July 28, August 11, and August 25 (all Wednesdays). We're going to sing contemporary Christian and camp songs, do some fun activities, engage in some experimental preaching, and share Communion—all settled in God's great creation! I'm hoping to get folks who are yearning for something new and different as well as those who are otherwise traveling on the summer weekends. I'm looking for volunteers!
 - Roaster Wranglers: make sure our weenies and s'more supplies are in full stock, and help people load their fire-roaster sticks.
 - Flame Gang: prepare our bonfire, keep it going, and make sure everyone is safe and happy around the fire.
 - Minstrels: if you can sing, dance, play an instrument, beat a drum, tell stories, chant, or read in front of others, we've got stuff for you to do!
 - Kindled Spirits: greeters who help everyone feel welcome and loved!
- Earn-To-Own Instruments: I will be teaching folks all summer how to play campfire guitar (very simple and limited canon of chords) and how to slap along on the cajon. You're never too old to learn, and we already have someone signed up for guitar lessons. :) You can earn your very own instrument by participating in these lessons and jamming along at the Bonfire Services (at least three services out of the five scheduled). We'll loan you an instrument for the summer to practice on which you can keep if you satisfy these requirements.

3. Treasurer's Report

- Offerings through April were \$132,128. This is down \$4,380 from giving through April 2020.
- Total expenses through April have been \$141,053. This is deficit of \$8,925 between income and expenses.
- The budgeted amount through April was \$161,899. So our expenses are running \$20,846 below the budgeted amount through April.
- The Controlled Savings Balance was \$138,029
- The Bank Balance at the end of April was \$98,468
- In addition, attended the zoom video meeting of the Gustavus Adolphus College Association of Congregations on Saturday, April 24, 2021.

2. **Endowment Committee Quarterly Report:** There was a gain of \$42,026 for the first quarter. The balance exceeds the amount of the original gifts by \$288,002. The committee has recommended changes to the "Endowment Request Form" and has created a "Request for Use of Endowment Funds Authorization Guidelines" document for Council Approval. **See Action Item #2.**

4. Endowment Fund Requests:

- Sabbatical expenses for Pastor Joy: **See Action Item #3.**
- Gift to "Gifts of Grace" in honor of Bishop Jon Anderson's faithful service to the SW MN Synod for 18 years: **See Action Item #4.**
- Bonfire worship: **See Action Item #5.**

5. **In-person meetings for committees and Council:** Discussed whether meeting times should be staggered to accommodate limited space or if all committee's should return to the usual times. Given the now anticipated lifting of restrictions by the Governor we will have the space to accommodate all committee's in-person at their usual times. **See Action Item #6.**

6. **Summer Office Hours:** Jen requested that the office close earlier during the summer to allow more opportunities for her to use vacation time. She proposes M-Th 8:30 am to 3:00 pm and Friday 8:30 am to 12:00 from Memorial Day to Labor Day. **See Action Item #7.**

7. Committee Reports

- Property Committee: Given the now anticipated lifting of restrictions by the Governor the committee feels there is no rush to update the HVAC in the education wing. They will shift their focus to a

preliminary building use study to determine what our building needs are. They are also looking for a rental property manager and will reach out to our congregation first for candidates.

- Community Life: They didn't have many people sign up for Mother's Day flowers so they decided to hand out flowers to all of the women at the services on Mother's Day. Up next for them is the goody bags for high school seniors.
- Children, Youth and Family: They continue working on their summer program which seems to be coming along.
- Worship, Music and Arts: They delivered TLC care packages for May.
- Mission: They continue to deliver meals to the Estate Apartment folks two times per month. They have met with coordinators from "The Kitchen" to discuss ways to serve the need for food more in our community.
- Adult Education: Barbara would like to see if the adult forum group would like to continue to meet in June if the space is available.
- Stewardship: They discussed ways to increase giving and recommends that the best thing to do right now is to reassure the congregation that we are doing well, to thank them for their support, and communicate with them more about our summer and fall plans.

B. Actions Taken:

1. **Motion M/S/P to approve the minutes of the April Council meeting.**
2. **Motion M/S/P to approve the adoption of the revised "Request for Use of Endowment Funds" form and the new "Request for Use of Endowment Funds Authorization Guidelines" form.**
3. **Motion M/S/P to approve of the endowment request from Pastor Joy for her sabbatical expenses. Up to \$4,950 to be taken from the Christian Education Fund (\$200) and the General Fund (\$4,750).**
4. **Motion M/S/P to approve of the endowment request from Pastor Joy for gift in honor of Bishop Jon Anderson. \$1,800 to be taken from the Foreign and Domestic Mission Fund (\$300) and the General Fund (\$1500).**
5. **Motion M/S/P to approve the endowment request from Pastor Nikoli for summer bonfire worship services. Up to \$2,500 as follows: Up to \$500 from the Christian Education Fund for any instruments and accessories going to adults who would be able to then lead this type of worship service, up to \$800 from the General Endowment Fund for the remainder of the "Earn to Own" instruments and accessories and up to \$1,200 from the Children, Youth, and Families Fund for the items needed to hold worship outdoors with food.**
6. **All committee and church council meetings will return to their usual dates and times and will be in-person.**
7. **Motion M/S/P to approve the request to reduce summer office hours to M-Th 8:30 am to 3:00 pm and Friday 8:30 am to 12:00 from Memorial Day to Labor Day.**

C. Responsibilities Assigned:

1. Jen will send out information about dates and times of committee meetings for the summer.
2. The council will collaborate after this meeting about how to execute the stewardship committee's recommendation.

D. Next meeting: June 8, 2021 at 6:30 pm in-person.

30-60-90

May

- 9 Last Day of Sunday School
- Mother's Day
- 1st Communion Worship Service
- 22 Funeral for Vern Olmanson
- Funeral for Carl Satrom (at the park)
- 23 1st Communion Worship Service
- Baccalaureate Worship Service
- 31 Offices Closed-Holiday

June

- 1 Pastor Joy's sabbatical begins
- 6-10 Vacation Bible School
- 19 Memorial Service for Donna Wick

July

- 5 Offices Closed-Holiday
- 5-9 Week of Mission
- 25-29 Shetek Day Camp at FLC