

St Stephen Lutheran Church

Church Council Meeting Minutes – June 14, 2021

Ken Smith called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm via ZOOM.

Present: Pastor Jim Woodruff, Betsy Clark, Paul Colaizy, Kristen Duffy, Marta Hohnstadt, Patsy Olson, Chris Sheldon, Ken Smith, Mira Stearns, Abby Ternus

Absent: Ted Schaff

Devotions: Pastor Jim Woodruff – Ephesians, Thessalonians, Romans – “As council members in a leadership role, it is important that we remain positive, respectful; interacting and encouraging each other as we continue being steadfast in our faith. Let us live in harmony with each other so that we may glorify our Father.”

Prayer Concerns: Floyd Redepenning, Lowell Benson, and Margery King families upon their deaths

Approval of Minutes –

A motion was made by Patsy Olson; 2nd by Paul Colaizy to approve the May 2021 council minutes. Voted on and carried.

Adjustments to the Agenda – None

Treasurer’s Report – Patsy Olson

Reports received including 2020 comparisons.

Current Fund: negative \$ 3,115.06

Capital Fund: \$ 120,179.54

Benevolence Fund: negative \$ 1,275.13

Special Designated Fund: \$ 98,652.80

Cash Reserve Fund: \$ 22,669.81

The **Current Fund** negative balance is expected as we enter the summer season. We are holding our own in comparison to past years. The **Capital Fund** balance will decrease as the furnace replacement and the new video system payments are made. A money transfer from the Special Designated Fund to the Capital Fund will show next month. The **Benevolence Fund** shows a negative balance due to funding of the Tanzania scholarships. Collectively, all funds are a ‘typical May’ for us.

Pastor’s Reports – Past Jim Woodruff

Report received. In-person worship services continue Wednesday night (averaging 30 people) and Sunday morning (averaging 72 people). The digital ministry video system from Z-Systems has been briefly delayed awaiting two components on back order. We continue hoping for a July install. The Digital Ministry Director position has been posted for 3 weeks with no applications received. Therefore, we will broaden our efforts to colleges, St Paul Synod, Facebook, and our church website etc. We continue to follow the COVID guidelines of the Minnesota Department of Health and the CDC which have changed significantly. There has been some confusion for us involving congregational singing in a faith-based setting with mixed populations of vaccinated and unvaccinated people. Currently we are recommending that masks be worn

indoors, but they are not required; and during congregational singing indoors that masks be worn but, once again, are not required. Melissa Whitman, Director of our Children, Youth and Family Ministry has given notice of her resignation as she has assumed responsibilities elsewhere effective July 31, 2021. She plans to cover all our youth summer programs, VBS and the Youth Mission Trip. She has faithfully served us for 7.5 years assuming responsibilities that were above and beyond her calling. We wish her well as she moves to a new position. Memorial service for Don Bendickson is planned this Saturday at 11:00 am.

Pastor Jim reports that Pastor Juli is on vacation this week, but 'catching up' on her home visits continues.

Ministry Team Reports – Ken Smith

Few ministry teams met in May as summer approaches.

A motion was made by Marta Hohnstadt; 2nd by Mira Stearns to accept the May Treasurer's Reports and Pastor's Reports.

New Business

COVID Statistics – Ken Smith

Screen-share presented showing COVID metrics continue dropping quickly. Infection rates have decreased and continue to drop significantly. All good news!

Indoor Congregation Singing – Pastor Jim Woodruff

Proposal to adopt MDH guidelines referred to website:
health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf

Minnesota Department of Health handout received showing "Recommendations for Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19 / Music in faith-based organizations." Discussion ensued on the wearing of masks during inside and outside worship services as well as while singing. The MN Dept of Health guidelines are clear in stating that wearing a mask is not a requirement BUT a recommendation only. This can be a 'slippery slope' in faith-based settings. June 30th all recommendations currently in place, are lifted and all mask mandates will expire. Pastor Jim will send an E-Blast to all congregants with the recommendation of encouraging the use of masks, but it is not a requirement unless government guidelines are changed. All signs at church referencing mask wearing will be removed. Once church choir resumes, will they be required to wear a mask? Conclusion is that they will make their own individual decision.

Planting Hope Initiative SPAS – Ken Smith

2021 Synod Assembly – Planting Hope – Saint Paul Area Synod, ELCA (spas-elca.org)

Screen-share presented. Recommend that we consider participating in this interesting 3-year campaign that begins in 2022. It covers 3 areas: building growth of the church, leadership growth and investment of East St Paul. A \$100. giving donation per congregant family is recommended. Consider appointing person/persons for training in Fall. Training to include leading an appeal to the congregation. Is it worth pursuing??? No council action is needed at this time. Encourages all to take a close look at the website. We will circle back to this at the July Council meeting.

Night to Unite – Patsy Olson

This event is scheduled for August 3, 2021. In the absence of Melissa Whitman, should we consider canceling for this year and focus on Rally Sunday instead which requires great preparation. All agreed it would be best to cancel 2021 Night to Unite.

Staffing Update and Discussion – Pastor Jim Woodruff

With the resignation of Melissa Whitman, a personal letter to her will be drafted and sent acknowledging all that she has brought to St Stephen as well as arranging a ‘send-off’ reception in her honor planned for Sunday, July 18th. Our Reception Committee will plan this honorary event.

Council Meetings Continue via Zoom – Ken Smith

Should the church council meetings continue via Zoom as COVID restrictions are soon lifted? Discussion ensued with most agreeing to continue via ZOOM thru the summer; to be revisited again in the fall.

Old Business

Video System Update and Fundraising Status, Staff Relations Update New Position – Pastor Jim Woodruff

In four weeks, the congregation raised the needed \$23,000. including a matching gift of \$2500. from the Cruisers. This exceeded all expectations! With Melissa Whitman’s departure and the delay in equipment, video-streaming will have to be delayed and only recorded on-line services will be made available.

Furnace #1 Replacement Postmortem - Ken Smith

This project is complete! During this project, attention was brought to the rough shape the roof is in. Repair estimates are needed. More to come on this.

Review Meeting Highlights - Ken Smith

Melissa Whitman’s departure and upcoming honorary event, reiterate current COVID policy guidelines, furnace completion, video system update and compare our Current Fund budget to a year ago will be communicated to the congregation.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Betsy Clark; 2nd by Ken Smith. Voted on and carried.

Ken Smith adjourned the meeting at 8:26 pm.

Next council meeting Monday, July 12, 2021.

Future 2021 meeting dates:

August 16 (fall event decisions)

Sept 13

Oct 11 (Ken traveling)

Nov 15

Dec 12 (Ken traveling)

Pastor Jim Woodruff closed with The Lord’s Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Teri Cinis