

St Stephen Lutheran Church

Church Council Meeting Minutes, August 8, 2022

Mira Stearns called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Present: Pastor Jim Woodruff, John Rohr, Mira Stearns, Judee Bramscher, Patsy Olson, and Marla Amborn

Absent: Ken Smith and Betsy Clark

Devotions: Pastor Jim's devotions focused on the need to be welcoming to all people, regardless of denominational affiliation or other differences. Impressions of how people are treated affect their willingness to participate in a church and their perceptions of God and faith. Pastor Jim shared that there have been four deaths in recent weeks. Members of the family of one of the people who died said that in the Catholic church where he grew up, they couldn't play basketball on the church basketball team because the family didn't give enough money. Also, he was removed from membership of a Lutheran church because he hadn't met his pledge for the year. These things make lasting impressions. Another family member recalls that when she was serving as a nurse in a hospice unit a Catholic patient asked her about her faith. Said she was Lutheran, and the woman began weeping saying, "You're not going to heaven because you're Lutheran." Suspicion between Protestants and Catholics was deep in the past. Scripture tells us to welcome the stranger – by doing so people have entertained angels without knowing it. Abram was told by God "by you I will bless **all** the nations of the earth." In Deuteronomy 10 Moses reminds the people that God commands them not to be partial but to treat the orphan and widow with justice to welcome strangers and provide for their needs. Once they were strangers in the Land of Egypt, so they are to welcome the stranger. As Christians, it is important to welcome the stranger and people who are different from us. In our faith community we need to welcome **all** people and treat them as beloved brothers and sisters in Christ.

Prayer Concerns: Pray for families grieving four recent deaths: Donna Volmer, Ozzie Berntson whose funeral will be on August 13, Eileen Ranalls whose funeral will be on August 20, Mavis Garret whose funeral will be on Aug 19. Also pray for Annette Johnson, recently home from hospital, hoping to be able to stay home but possibly facing a change of living arrangements. Also pray for Vacation Bible School which started today.

Approval of Minutes – No changes to the minutes. Minutes for the July Council meeting were voted on.

A motion was made by Mira Sterns and seconded by Patsy Olson. Voted on and carried unanimously.

Adjustments to the Agenda: There was one addition to the agenda - an update from the nominating committee (Marla Amborn).

Treasurer's Report – Patsy Olson

Balance sheet Total cash assets: Checking \$102,154.22. Savings \$32,776.50. CDs totaling \$48,291.46. Grand total \$189,325.63. Congregational giving is in the realm of average for this time of year.

Benevolence Fund Net income balance of \$1,755.26. We made regular donations but no additional benevolence donations.

Capital Fund Net income \$113,114.13. The capital fund is at a healthy level. With anticipated expenses for the furnace and transferring money to the new endowment fund, liquid assets will decrease. The furnace is expected to cost \$35,900.

Cash Reserve Fund \$35,693.29. Cash reserve is growing very slowly.

Current Fund -\$48,214.38. This is on the higher end of a deficit for this time of year - 65%.

Special Designated \$82,501.89 This total will reduce when we pay for peace poles. We will be taking money out of the Endowment Fund and investing it in CDs so it will go out of Special Designated and become an asset.

Approval of Treasurer's Report

A motion was made by Mira Sterns and seconded by John Rorh to approve the Treasurer's Report. Voted on and carried unanimously.

Pastor's Report – Pastor Jim Woodruff

Overall we're back to doing most of the things we did pre-pandemic.

Furnace installation – The furnaces came July 25 and are in the midst of installing. They are taking this week off from installation due to VBS and will resume when VBS is over.

Peace Poles - The Peace poles and benches will be installed this week. The group has decided where they will go.

Vacation Bible School – VBS is off to a good start with 39 kids registered plus adults and helpers.

Endowment Fund – The Endowment Fund has met the \$25,000 minimum to invest with the ELCA Endowment Fund and \$25,580 to be deposited within the week.

Pastoral Ministry - Officiated for 1 wedding – for David Galloway and Mary Hynes (July 30), and 3 funerals. Funerals were for: Donna Vollmer (July 18), Amy Haase (July 19), Daniel Miller (August 3) – two of these funerals were for non-members.

Pastors Report – Juli Thompson

Pastor Juli provided a written Visitation Report for May through July. During that time, she conducted 10 home visits and 9 visits to hospitals or care centers and also reached out to people through pastoral phone calls. She was involved in 10 worship services. She served on the Tanzania mission team attended the St. Paul Area Synod Assembly and was involved in multiple staff meetings and other meetings.

Approval of Pastors' Reports

A motion was made by Marla Amborn and seconded by John Rohr to Approve the Pastor's Reports. Voted on and carried unanimously.

New Business

Kitchen Update Proposal – Pastor Jim

A proposal has been made by the kitchen committee that the congregation raise \$14,000 for a new refrigerator, new sinks, dishwashers, new plates and utensils. At the last council meeting we discussed this and decided not to do additional financial appeals until after the annual meeting. The refrigerator is having serious problems – it is rusting and the door doesn't seal properly which causes problems. Replacing this refrigerator is a high priority. Jill Sandvik is highlighting the advantages of being equipped as a commercial kitchen compared with a food prep kitchen which is what we currently have. If we prepare food for outside people – like a daycare – we would need a commercial kitchen. But for current usage it's okay to have a food prep kitchen. The kitchen committee recently re-did the ceilings, lights, cabinets etc. They believed there was more money available but at this time it is only about \$300 left in this fund. Could we pull some other money from Memorial Funds?

There are some congregation members complaining about the Endowment Fund. They don't recognize its long-term benefit. Ideally Endowment Fund would prompt people to put St. Stephen in their will or estate. In this time when we are launching the Endowment Fund it isn't a good time to also ask for additional capital donations. We will also need a fall stewardship appeal to make up the deficit. *The Council recommends that we wait for any new fund raisers until after the annual meeting and then reassess, unless the refrigerator stops working and needs to be replaced.*

Action Item – *Pastor Jim to tell Jill Sandvik of Council's decision.*

This request pointed to a need to create a new 5-year plan – a shared vision for property, programming, evangelism, and ministry. Our last 5-year plan has expired. It was suggested we bring in Justin Grimm, from the St. Paul Area Synod office, to facilitate a visioning process. Last time we did a 5-year visioning process a group met for one day, compiled input later, followed up with a congregational survey, then a smaller committee put together a visioning document. Maybe we could follow a similar process.

Action item - *Mira agreed to contact Justin Grimm to ask if he could facilitate a visioning process sometime in October and to identify possible dates.*

It was noted that we will need to promote the visioning retreat to people in leadership to ensure broad representation.

Old Business

Special Olympics – Mira Stearns

The summer Special Olympics is now over. It went really well. About 40 kids participated overall but on any given day it was 25-30. Five volunteers from St. Stephen helped out with the program. There is a plan to hold Special Olympics again during the school year and next summer. We did this in partnership with Redeemer and Christ the King.

Furnace update – Pastor Jim

(Discussed as part of Pastor Jim's report.)

Peace Poles – Pastor Jim

(Discussed as part of Pastor Jim's report.)

Endowment Fund – Pastor Jim

(Discussed as part of Pastor Jim's report.) We have reached the starting goal. Denise Ashley agreed to serve to fill the vacant position on the Endowment Fund Committee.

VBS – Mira Stearns

Today was first day of VBS. We are off to a good start.

Relay for Life – Marla Amborn

Our involvement with Relay for Life started by Jerry Engen in honor of his daughter-in-law who had cancer. St. Stephen has participated for 27 of the 28 years that White Bear has held a Relay for Life. This year we raised over \$5,800 through the Spirit of St Stephen team and over \$104,000 for the White Bear relay overall. A big thank you to all who contributed!

Nominating Committee – Marla Amborn

Betsy Clark provided a written update on the work of the committee which Marla relayed to the council.

We have 7 positions to fill: three 1-year terms, one 2-year term, three 3-year terms. Two people have agreed to serve 3-year terms, so one more is still needed. We still need one for a 2-year term. One person has agreed to serve a 1-year term so there are still two more 1-year terms to fill. The committee is actively working on finding nominees to fill the remaining open positions.

Meeting highlights - All

- 5-year visioning process
- Furnaces are being installed
- Peace poles are being installed
- Endowment fund has reached initial goal and is in the process of being opened
- VBS report

Concern – A concern was raised that some people can't hear Pastor Juli when she gives a sermon. It was suggested that Zack can increase the sound when she is speaking and boost lower range of her voice.

Action item – *Pastor Jim will talk with Zack about making these adjustments.*

Adjourn – *A motion was made by Mira Stearns, second by John Rohr, to close the Council meeting. Voted on and carried unanimously. Adjourned at 8:30 PM*

Closed with the Lord's Prayer

Respectfully submitted,

Marla Amborn