

St Stephen Lutheran Church
Church Council Meeting, January 8, 2024

Ted Field called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Present: Marla Amborn (President) (via speaker phone), Ted Field (Vice President), Cheryl Skrypez, Phyllis Ballata, Denise Ashley, Scott Ziemann, Kathy Stickler, Bethany Zenner, Mary Beth Skunes (Treasurer), Interim Pastor Karri Anderson.

Absent: NONE

Devotion – Pastor Karri Anderson. Devotion from “Growing Together” chapter 49. Scripture was Ecclesiastes 3:1-2. Questions asked to the council:

- 1) What accomplishments are you most proud of this last year?
 - a. Pat Miles seminar event open to the public. We also partnered with Lake Country Booksellers for this event. We got connected into “Explore White Bear.”
 - b. Executive Team dealt with some really tough challenges last year and they deserve credit. Council has also worked well navigating this transition.
 - c. Council helpful getting the MET committee together.
 - d. Wonderful series of send-off events for Pastor Jim.
- 2) In the coming year, what are some opportunities and challenges that you see.
 - a. Finance team had a tough job, very proud of them and their budget presentation.
 - b. Call committee will have a big challenge.
 - c. Also exciting opportunity to welcome in a new pastor.
 - d. Also for the congregation – time of discovery and self-examination now and in the future. Having had a pastor for a long time, you get settled in, get used to things. Now you are forced to look at things differently. Great opportunity for the congregation.
- 3) What do we need to hear more from God.
 - a. That we will make it through this difficult period without arguing, getting mad. Stay focused, keep friendships.
 - b. Those who manage change well should help others to manage change.
 - c. We also need to be trusting that we will have the resources to do God’s work.
 - d. We are glad that Pastor Karri is here.

Prayer Concerns –ALL

Betsy friend Lisa. Bill. Kathy friend Sara. Justin and Marissa. Pastor Karri led us in prayer.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes for December 2023 reviewed. Pastor Karri name misspelled last paragraph, second page. Will correct. Betsy will resubmit corrected December minutes to Tami.

MOTION: A motion was made by Cheryl Skrypez and seconded by Phyllis Ballata to approve the December 2023 Council minutes with spelling correction. Voted on and carried unanimously.

Adjustments to the Agenda – NONE

REPORTS:

Treasurer’s Report – Mary Beth Skunes (Treasurer)
December Treasurer’s Report is included for review.

Council Minutes
January 8, 2024

- 2 CD's came due, merged for a special business rate for 7 months at 4.8%. They were originally sitting at 1%.
- Current Fund will be changed to "General Fund." Congregation is being asked to give to ONE fund, not spread over 4 funds as in the past.
- Benevolence monthly payment obligations will not change. These totals are now listed at the end of the General Fund report.
- Capital and Cash Reserve funds will still have their own reports.
- December income was over \$93,000. December expenses were around \$39,000.
- 2023 end of year balance was -\$50,408.21 (not -\$80,000 that was projected).

MOTION: A motion was made by Denise Ashley and seconded by Kathy Stickler to approve the December 2023 Treasurer's Report. Voted on and carried unanimously.

Pastor's Report – Marla Amborn

Pastor Juli Thompson report found in the packet. Marla reported appreciation on what Juli was able to do during this interim period. Handled Christmas by herself. Marla encouraged council members to thank Juli for her work.

Ministry Team Reports – ALL

Worship and Music – Denise Ashley

- Wednesday night Lenten liturgy will continue to be Holden Evening Prayer.
- Maundy Thursday and Good Friday need to confirm starting times.
- Betsy emailed Ben Millard about the Fools doing Maundy Thursday. Betsy will ask Ben Millard for theme. We will want a script to review as soon as possible.
- Kathy Anderson will organize Lenten lunches.
- Cindy is selecting the hymns but Pastor Karri would like to have input on the hymn of the day.

Fellowship – Cheryl Skrypez

Living Nativity December 16. Went very well. Attendance was very high, maybe 200 people. Lots of energy. Advertised in MN Parent and another online family oriented site. Goal next year is to ask people from the community to sign up for roles.

MOTION: A motion was made by Ted Field and seconded by Marla Amborn to approve the Pastor's Report and Ministry Team Reports. Voted on and carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

Interim Update – Kathy Stickler, Marla Amborn, Ted Field

The Call Committee met last Thursday. The focus of that meeting was two-fold:

- 1) Develop interview questions for pastoral candidates. Looked at all the information from the MET and ELCA. Took all those questions and culminated them together. Marla also gave them three pages of possible questions that they were able to go through and rank, then narrowed everything down to 9 questions.
- 2) Nominate call committee chairperson, communicator, and chaplain. Co-chairs nominated – Karen Smith and Kathy Stickler. Kathy and Karen met today and laid out a plan to move

forward with the call committee process. The committee will meet every other week. They will put together an article for the Steppingstone and weekly update following their Thursday meeting. They will do an in-person update at the Sunday service following their Thursday meeting. The MSP was sent to the synod last Friday, so the synod has started the process of finding us candidates. We got two nominations from the congregation (nomination period closed January 7). Karen was going to work on articles for Steppingstone and weekly update before she left for vacation. Call committee has a detailed check list that they will go through.

Toolkit for Congregational Leaders 2024 – Marla Amborn

The Toolkit will be February 24, at Faith Lutheran in Forest Lake. Ongoing and new Council members are encouraged to attend. Also any other leaders of the church. There is a cost of \$20 (for lunch and materials) that will be paid for by St. Stephen. Anyone interested should give registration information to Tami in the office. The deadline for registration is February 20. Synod Conference Assembly is also happening in the morning. ACTION: Betsy will give a copy of the Toolkit schedule to the new council members.

NEW BUSINESS

Pastoral Housing Allowance – Marla Amborn

Pastor Karri Anderson housing allowance for 2024 will be \$24,000. Pastor Juli Thompson housing allowance for 2024 will be \$8,220.

MOTION: A motion was made by Marla Amborn and seconded by Phyllis Ballata to approve the housing allowances for Pastor Karri Anderson and Pastor Juli Thompson as listed above. Voted on and carried unanimously.

Lenten Ministry Team Soup & Sandwich Schedule – Betsy Clark

Ministry Teams will be preparing the Lenten meal before service on Wednesdays. Jodie Millard will purchase all sandwich makings and have it available in the kitchen. Each ministry team is responsible for making soup. If a team is not comfortable making soup, Jodie can make the soup for them. She will also put some recipes together. Pastor Karri mentioned that Costco and Sam’s Club both have nice soups in large bags that can be used. Food should be for around 35 people. Jodie Millard will purchase sandwich supplies each week. Meal is from 5:15 to 6:00 pm. Lenten service starts at 6:00 pm.

Menu:

Sandwiches (bread, meat, cheese, condiments, lettuce if you want)

Soup (make enough for around 35-40 people)

Dessert (does not need to be homemade)

Water or milk or lemonade

Set-up time – get soup and sandwiches set up by around 5:00 pm. Preparing soup will need to be earlier in the day. Clean-up time – 6:00 pm

MINISTRY TEAM SIGN-UP

February 14, Ash Wednesday	NO MEAL
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February 21	Worship and Music (Denise Ashley)
February 28	Children/Youth/Family (Melissa Whitman, Sue Lemon)
March 6	Adult Learning (Scott Zieman), Finance (Ted Field)
March 13	Fellowship (Cheryl Skrypez, Betsy Clark)
March 20	Property (Kathy Stickler), Congregational & Community Care (Phyllis Ballata)
March 27	NO MEAL

Election of Council President for 2024 – Marla Amborn

Marla nominated Ted Field (currently Vice President) for President in 2024. No other nominations. Ted is willing to serve. Kathy Stickler will be Vice President and she will be nominated at the annual meeting on January 28.

MOTION: A motion was made by Marla Amborn and seconded by Phyllis Ballata to approve the nomination of Ted Field as Council President for 2024. Voted on and carried unanimously.

2024 Budget Discussion – Mary Beth Skunes

2024 budget was presented to Council members. The budget is listed currently as having net income of -\$59,659.93 which the Finance Team at the special congregation meeting on January 7 stated is not sustainable because of the additional \$50,000 deficit being carried over from the 2023 budget.

Therefore, the following additional changes were recommended by the Finance Team:

- 1) Reduce the 2024 net income balance of -\$59,659.93 to balance the 2024 budget through:
 - a. Asking for ADDITIONAL GIVING of \$30,000 to happen within the FIRST 4 MONTHS of 2024.
 - b. Also find an additional \$29,659.93 in expenses to CUT throughout the early part of the 2024 year. This will NOT happen before the Annual Meeting.
- 2) So, the budget being presented to the congregation at the annual meeting on January 28 will be a faith budget with the following adjustments:
 - a. Income line 115 additional income needed of \$30,000 (this needs to be ADDITIONAL income beyond what has been pledged) and it needs to be collected within the first 4 months of 2024. This will bring the Total Income up to \$376,440 (from \$346,440).
 - b. Below the Total Expenses Line of \$406,099.93, there will be a line named “Step-Down Budget Reduction” of -\$29,659.93 to reduce the Total Expenses to \$376,440.00. This will result in a net income of \$0. This expense reduction will occur over time in 2024 through the help of an ad hoc team to be established by Council.
 - c. There will be a carryover line BELOW the Net Income line which will list the 2023 carryover of -\$50,406.21 which will not be a focus of reduction in 2024. The plan will be to end up with no more than a \$50,000 deficit at the end of 2024 going into 2025.
- 3) Additional expense changes made:
 - a. All salary raises were removed (salaries for staff to remain at 2023 levels). Council was told that these raises could be added to the budget at any time in 2024 if the budget was

doing well. It could also happen as an end-of-year bonus. It's best to remove the raises now and be able to add them back in if the budget supports it.

- b. Small reductions in Childrens and Youth budgets.
- c. Social Security was added to Pastor Juli's salary. It has never been added before. Marla will talk to Pastor Juli about this.

A lot of discussion ensued. Marla recommended that the council recommend a special ad hoc task force to come up with a plan on where we can make cuts. Some methods to reduce costs: 1) get an energy audit from the power company, 2) solar panels, churches aren't required to have front money for this, 3) shared staffing arrangements with Redeemer.

MOTION: A motion was made by Marla Amborn and seconded by Cheryl Skrypez to approve the 2024 budget with the adjustments listed above. Voted on and carried unanimously.

Council Highlights:

- 1) 2023 was a big year for council. Sincere thank you to all the council members who have completed their term this year and for those who are continuing.
- 2) Sincere thank you to our outgoing President Marla Amborn for a job well done.
- 3) Council approved a 2024 budget that will be presented at the annual meeting January 28.
- 4) Council spent time getting to know our new interim Pastor Karri Anderson.

Communion signup list – ALL

Date	Server 1	Server 2	Server 3	Server 4
Sun, January 14	Pastor Karri	Kathy Stickler	Cheryl Skrypez	Phyllis Ballata
Sun, January 21	Pastor Karri	Denise Ashley	Ted Field	Betsy Clark
Sun, January 28	Pastor Karri	Pastor Juli	Ted Field	Kathy Stickler
Sun, February 4	Pastor Karri	Betsy Clark	Mary Beth Skunes	OPEN
Wed, February 7	Pastor Karri	Cheryl Skrypez		
Sun, February 11	Pastor Karri	Denise Ashley	Scott Zieman	Mary Beth Skunes

MOTION: A motion was made by Kathy Stickler and seconded by Bethany Zenner to close the Council meeting. Voted on and carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm

Closed with the Lord's Prayer.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING: Monday, February 12, 2024, at 7:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Betsy Clark
Council Secretary