

**St Stephen Lutheran Church**  
**Church Council Meeting, March 11, 2024**

Ted Field called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

**Present:** Ted Field (President), Marla Amborn (Past President), Kathy Stickler (Vice President), Phyllis Ballata, Denise Ashley, Scott Zieman, Susan Lemon, Jackie Colaizy, Nancy Finley, Mary Beth Skunes (Treasurer).

**Absent:** Interim Pastor Karri Anderson.

**Devotions** – Ted Field

Luke 9:62. (Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”) If you have obligations at home, can you still follow Jesus? No one should look back while they are plowing. The path will be straight only when you look forward. This passage is relevant to our church’s future. It’s important that we keep looking forward, our future is going to look different than our past. We can keep our mission and ministries, but we should not look back. God has a plan for us, let us be diligent, plow straight, work well together, come up with good decisions, it will be a challenge, but it is possible.

**Prayer Concerns** – ALL

Nancy Finley cousin Steve, Kathy friend Sara, Marla led us in prayer.

**Approval of Minutes:** Minutes for February 12, 2024, were reviewed.

*MOTION: A motion was made by Marla Amborn and seconded by Nancy Finley to approve the February 12, 2024, Council minutes. Voted on and carried unanimously.*

**Adjustments to the Agenda** – NO ADJUSTMENTS

**REPORTS:**

**Treasurer’s Report** – Mary Beth Skunes (Treasurer)

February Treasurer’s Report was included for review. February income (\$25,838.78) was slightly lower than February expenses (\$30,047.07) which is typical for February. We should see higher income in March because of Lent and Easter but because Easter is the last day of the month, some of that income will spill into the next month. Because of a large donation on March 1, Mary Beth purchased a 7-month CD at 4.9% interest. Our cash on hand is looking good for spring and there is plenty in the money market to cover any summer slippage. Our ending fund balance for February is \$-30,260.24. Question was asked if there is a way when giving on line to designate to the special appeal. Mary Beth thought that Jill had added that.

*MOTION: A motion was made by Nancy Finley and seconded by Jackie Colaizy to approve the February 2024 Treasurer’s Report. Voted on and carried unanimously.*

**Pastor Reports** – Pastors

Pastor Juli Thompson’s report was not submitted. Pastor Karri report in packet to read.

### **Ministry Team Reports – ALL**

No ministry team reports to present that are not budget related. Those reports will be presented later in the meeting.

*MOTION: A motion was made by Denise Ashley and seconded by Phyllis Ballata to approve the Pastor Reports and Ministry Team Reports. Voted on and carried unanimously.*

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

#### **Call Committee Update – Kathy Stickler**

The call committee process has been going very well. The first candidate interview was on Sunday. Three more candidates will be interviewed before Easter. After completion of first round interviews, the committee will get back to all four candidates before the second week in April and from there, narrow the field down to two candidates. Plan is for those two candidates to come for in-person interviews. The committee is doing an amazing job asking great questions, including follow-up questions when needed. This Sunday the committee will provide an update to the congregation. The four candidates are all men, one is within SPAC, the other 3 from outside. All first interviews will be via ZOOM, second interviews will be in person. If we don't like any of the 4, we will go back to the drawing board. Pastor Karri will be completing her interim position with us by June 15, so if we have to proceed with a second group, the process will most likely go beyond Karri's time with us. We have the advantage that every church the pastor presides has video streaming, we can watch them in practice. The committee watches their sermons prior to the interview and look at their rostered ministry profile (which is around 15 pages long). We have a rating system that we are using, tells us who rated the person low, who rated the person high, starts talking points among the committee members. The candidate who we interviewed on Sunday said that our MSP was the best he has seen from the multiple churches he has interviewed with. Our team is very diverse and very good, working well together. Ideally, we would want a pastor to start by June 15, but it will depend on the length of notice the person will need to give. The committee could potentially be picking someone in April. That person would have to give his congregation a minimum of 30 days' notice. The earliest start would be mid-May. Karen Smith mailed out a very nice packet of information about St. Stephen to all the candidates.

#### **Youth Covenant Partnership Update – All**

Reminder that this partnership provides a way for youth to raise money for mission trips without having to sell anything and provides an obligation to enter into relationships with partner families. This is a new idea with our congregation. Marla said that it has been emphasized to Melissa that there needs to be advertising for this program. Fundraising effort does not necessarily need to be approved by council unless it's conflicting with another fundraiser. Plan is a partnership between members and youth from the same church (St. Stephen and Redeemer both will do this). Overall, the goal is to find ways to meet with the youth either at church or away from church, or go to a kid's game, etc.

**DECISION:** Following discussion, the council supports this program and wants it to succeed. Melissa will be encouraged to promote the program and come up with ways to communicate it to the congregation through adult forums and other communication methods. The council wants to encourage youth to come to Sunday morning worship services. Council recommends that Melissa start advertising this program as soon as possible, especially if she wants the program to begin in

September. The age group this program is targeting is grades 6-12. ACTION: Ted will communicate the council's decision to Melissa.

**Outreach Focus of Council Retreat** – Ted Field, Marla Amborn

Date of retreat will be March 21, 6-9 pm with dinner. We will meet at church. We will not follow the traditional agenda but instead will focus on brainstorming how to develop a successful church outreach program. Outreach is not the responsibility of just one ministry team; it is a whole congregation effort. Kathy attended a session at the recent Toolkit Assembly that talked about how to become a more welcoming church and got some good ideas. Marla will be focusing on the evangelism ministry team starting in June after her interim pastor position ends. Marla is anticipating this retreat to be a brainstorming period. Figure out ways of getting into the community.

**Toolkit Assembly Report** – Kathy Stickler

Kathy Stickler, Sue Lemon, and Jackie Colaizy attended. Each person had the opportunity to go to 2 sessions.

Kathy went to a session about revisioning spaces in your church. It was run by Anne Gerriets. She works as a church building consultant. She talked about how churches can be more welcoming, like can you find the door, what do the doors look like, strategic location of pictures (new or old), parking lot, are there ample spaces, is the kitchen the type that will heat food or cook food, are the restrooms wheelchair accessible. Anne showed slides of churches that weren't that great and those that were. Showed slides of churches who have repurposed some of their space. One church started a tool library where people could check out tools, it blossomed into home projects. Habitat for Humanity came in to borrow tools from them. Other churches have repurposed space into medical and mental health clinics, one has an art gallery where artists display their art, some have pickleball courts and community gardens, some with tiny homes on their grounds to help with the homeless. There are crying rooms for babies and parents with views of the sanctuary, rocking chairs in the back of the sanctuary, full glass somewhere for children and the handicapped to view the service, quiet activities for kids to work at a table during the service.

The other session Kathy went to was "Care of Creation" (website [ecofaithnetwork.org](http://ecofaithnetwork.org)). The focus was on recycling, taking care of our earth, reducing energy. Faith Lutheran, where the Toolkit Assembly was held, recycles everything. They got recycling bins for free.

Jackie and Sue attended "Asset-Based Community Development". This seminar focused on looking at things that may seem like deficits but may actually be assets. Their second session was on "Service Through Meaningful Work" but it was difficult to hear the speaker so didn't get much out of it.

**2024 Generosity Challenge** – ALL

Budget reduction ideas were presented from various ministry teams and staff relations committee.

Staff Relations – Ted Field

The council was given a report from staff relations that contained a menu of options for adjusting staff salaries and benefits. Staff relations was directed to study these options between now and the next council meeting.

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### Fellowship – Jackie Colaizy

Fellowship budget contains income sources (Wednesday night meal, Music Festival and Auction, Sunday cookie donations). Income exceeded expenses by \$6,000 in 2023. Additional revenue and cost-saving ideas include adding \$650 identified special designated memorial money into Wednesday evening meal for the summer, resume use of coffee mugs during fellowship hour, resume snack sponsorship on Sunday mornings and use sweets that are usually in large supply from funerals, etc, rather than buying fresh, identify grill master for outdoor GAP worship to ensure there is someone available so expensive food isn't purchased last minute. Addition and savings of around \$800.

### Office Ads and Banners – Marla Amborn

We eliminated our weekly ad in the WB Press which saved \$914. Some council members objected to this move but the purpose was to use this money to focus on other advertising methods. Tami identified what banners we have and identified some banners that still need to be purchased. She was able to find about \$155 in savings for 2024.

### Administration, Property, Worship and Music – Ted Field

Jill Sandvik has gone over contracts and office use. Some savings have been identified. Will investigate updating our database to get better sense of our membership which will allow a better understanding of our copyright and licensing agreements. Attempt to increase flower sponsorship or cut down from two vases to one on Sundays. Total potential savings identified \$2,000 to \$6,000 over the next three years.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Parents Night Out Proposal** – Sue Lemon

Tabled until next month's meeting.

### **Sharing Ministries with Redeemer** – Marla Amborn

Marla Amborn, Ted Field, Pastor Karri Anderson, and Pastor Dan Streeper from Redeemer met and did some brainstorming with sharing ministries. One idea raised was resurrecting the Bell Choir as a combined choir as their choir director is interested in leading that. A combined Redeemer and St. Stephen committee was formed. St. Stephen members of this team will be Cindy Scott, Dan & July Ruth, John King, and Randy Amborn.

### **Representatives at Synod Assembly** – Ted Field

The Synod Assembly will be Friday May 10 Saturday May 11 at St. Andrews in Mahtomedi. Friday night worship service at 7:00 pm is open to all members (you don't have to be a delegate to attend this service). Friday from 5-7pm will be a mission fair with vendors present. Saturday 8:30 am to 2:30 pm will focus on synod business. We need two representatives to attend (preferably one man and one woman). Ted Field has volunteered to attend. Kathy Stickler will look at her schedule and see if she can attend.

### **Council Highlights:**

1. The February treasurer's report reflects the success of the Generosity Challenge in its first two months, reducing our General Fund deficit from \$50,408 to \$30,260.
2. A Call Committee report was given, highlighting the progress of the pastoral call process.

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3. One candidate interview has been completed and three more are scheduled before Easter. The expectation is that one or two candidates will be chosen for second interviews in early April and an offer will be extended to the committee's selected candidate by the middle of the month.
4. The council gave its support to a program called a Youth Covenant Partnership in which St. Stephen youth will develop relationships with other church members to seek spiritual and financial support on their faith journeys.
5. The council retreat will be held on March 21, with its focus on brainstorming ideas for becoming a more welcoming church and growing in our outreach in 2024.
6. The council continued its discussion of ways church expenses can be reduced to make our finances more sustainable.
7. Representatives to this year's Synod Assembly were identified, to be held at St. Andrews Church on May 10-11. The May 10 agenda includes a worship service to which all our church members are invited.

**Communion Signup List – ALL**

The open slots will be filled out later with Tami Heart's assistance.

Date	Server 1	Server 2	Server 3	Server 4
Sun, March 17	Pastor Karri		Nancy Finley	
Sun, March 24	Pastor Karri	Pastor Juli	Sue Lemon	
Thur, March 28, noon	Pastor Karri			
Thur, March 28, 7pm	Pastor Karri	Pastor Juli		
Sun, March 31	Pastor Karri	Pastor Juli	Nancy Finley	Scott Zieman
Wed, April 3	Pastor Karri	Denise Ashley		
Sun, April 7	Pastor Ben Coltvvet	Phillis Ballata	Denise Ashley	
Sun, April 14	Pastor Juli	Ted Field	Denise Ashley	Phyllis Ballata
Sun, April 21	Pastor Karri	Kathy Stickler	Sue Lemon	Ted Field
Sun, April 28	Pastor Karri	Ted Field	Jackie Colaizy	Paul Colaizy
Wed, May 1	Pastor Karri			
Sun, May 5	Pastor Juli	Scott Zieman	Nancy Finley	Ted Field
Sun May 12				

**Adjourn** – Ted Field

*MOTION: A motion was made by Jackie Colaizy and seconded by Sue Lemon to close the Council meeting. Voted on and carried unanimously.*

**Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.**

**Closed with the Lord's Prayer.**

**NEXT COUNCIL MEETING: Monday, April 8, 2024, at 7:00 pm**

Respectfully submitted,  
Betsy Clark  
Council Secretary