

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

Ted Field called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

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

Absent: Interim Pastor Karri Anderson, Denise Ashley

Devotions – Marla Amborn

Devotion revolved around Matthew 6:25-30. The passage was read out loud and then council members were asked what words in the passage spoke to them. No need to worry, God will provide. Trust in his plan. There is worry during this time, it is important to identify that; God is providing us with people and resources to work through this time, but ultimately it is God's plan. Need faith. Work on what we can do.

Prayer Concerns – ALL

Nancy Finley cousin Steve, Kathy friend Sara, Marla new grandchild due soon, pray for healthy delivery. Marla led us in prayer.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes for March 11, 2024, were reviewed.

MOTION: A motion was made by Jackie Colaizy and seconded by Nancy Finley to approve the March 11, 2024, Council minutes. Voted on and carried unanimously.

Adjustments to the Agenda – One adjustment

- Old Business (place after Call Committee Report)
 - Council Retreat Questions assigned to council members.

REPORTS:

Treasurer's Report – Mary Beth Skunes (Treasurer)

Funds for the Generosity Challenge continue to steadily come in. We are a little over \$24,000 of the \$30,000 needed to be raised. Income surpassed expenses for March because of the generosity challenge and more people changing to yearly giving instead of weekly or monthly. Expenses were up a bit because of our quarterly insurance payment of \$5,000 made in March. We now have another view of income and expenses so the council can see a comparison for each month. March starting balance \$-30,260.24. March income \$46,896.77. March expenses \$35,100.80. Ending fund balance for March \$-18,464.27. Questions: What was the \$4,470 expense in capital fund for? It was a down payment on organ parts. This is part of the expected capital expense for repair of the organ. What was income from Easter? Most of the income from Easter will be reported in April. There was around \$900 to the Generosity Challenge fund and \$900 to the general fund.

MOTION: A motion was made by Sue Lemon and seconded by Kathy Stickler to approve the March 2024 Treasurer's Report. Voted on and carried unanimously.

Pastor Reports – Pastors

Pastor Karri report in packet to read. Council did not get a report from Pastor Juli. Marla noted that Pastor Karri wrote in her report that she has finished one-on-one interviews.

Ministry Team Reports – ALL

There were no ministry reports.

MOTION: A motion was made by Marla Amborn and seconded by Nancy Finley to approve the Pastor Reports and Ministry Team Reports. Voted on and carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

Call Committee Update – Kathy Stickler

Kathy reported that the Call Committee has completed interviews of the 4 pastoral candidates. Out of the 4 candidates, the committee had a unanimous vote to invite one of the candidates back for a second interview and to not pursue a second interview with the remaining 3 candidates. Kathy anticipates that the second interview with the candidate will occur early in May as the candidate is currently on vacation. Kathy reported that the decision-making process for the committee was very positive. The decision on who to invite back was based on multiple levels: preaching style, how questions were answered, where our church is at right now and where we want to go, the nature of our church, and who would best fit with the culture of our church. Kathy has spoken with our ELCA representative, Rolf Lowenberg-DeBoer, and he assured the committee that if we ended up with no candidates from this group, he would be able to provide additional candidates to us within a quick timeline.

Council Retreat Questions – Kathy Stickler

Council members were assigned a question about our welcoming or non-welcoming nature by Kathy Stickler at the retreat. There wasn't enough time to answer these questions during the retreat so council members provided answers at today's meeting.

- 1) What does our building say about us, our ministry, and our values? (assigned to Scott Zieman)
 - a. Our "in the round" sanctuary is more contemporary.
 - b. Entryways are dark, need more light.
 - c. Fellowship hall is an inviting place.
- 2) If visitors come to our church, either in person or digitally, who would they turn to if they have questions? How can we make it easy and clear for them to find answers? (assigned to Nancy Finley)
 - a. We have greeters who should provide answers.
 - b. We have our St. Stephen Welcome brochure available at the visitor guest book.
 - c. Those who sign the guest book need follow-up from someone.
 - d. Sue said that she had experience at another church where new people were assigned someone to be with them, sit with them, do things with them.
- 3) How does our website provide quick and easy answers to common questions a new person might have? (assigned to Kathy Stickler)
 - a. Kathy looked at multiple church websites including St. Stephen.
 - b. Didn't like Gustavus Adolfs' website. Eagle Brook not bad, flowed well. St. Andrews website well designed.
 - c. St. Stephen Welcome page – there is nothing on the page; needs to be updated. Also Kathy feels the scrolling banner is distracting, needs to reduce size of banner. There is lots of good information but needs better flow.

- 4) What system does our congregation use to intentionally designate specific people to “meet and greet” visitors? How might this be done online for virtual visitors as well? (assigned to Sue Lemon)
 - a. We have greeters at our front door but not at our back door.
 - b. No space for moms and kids or young families to go if need to leave the sanctuary and listen to sermon or play. We could set up TV screens in narthex or in nursery area so they can watch the live stream.
- 5) What partners or friends do you know in the community who could be “secret shoppers” and enter our physical or digital space as an “outsider,” providing your congregation with important feedback? (assigned to Phyllis Ballata)
 - a. Had one of the choir members from Redeemer be her example. They were coming for choir rehearsal Wednesday night when there was not a Wednesday service so the back door was locked. Was let in the back door but the back part of the church was dark. Maybe consider sensors on the lights so they automatically come on, but we decided that this might be a bad idea as they need to stay on when there are church services going on.
- 6) What talents are untapped because someone “always has done that”? (assigned to Jackie Colaizy)
 - a. We tend to go back to the same people for certain talents. Need to remember to not overlook other peoples’ talents.
- 7) How do we better understand Millennials, Gen Z, etc? Our church is a boomer generation, they don’t want to be associated with us – they see us as bad. (assigned to Marla Amborn)
 - a. Where Marla is interim, there is a young family who will be joining as new members who were very intentional when looking for a new church. They wanted a church where there were other kids at church. They visited different churches, each for a 1-month period.
 - b. At our church, we need to reach out to our young families and invite them back to church, stating we need them at church so there is a core group of young families.
- 8) What gifts does our church have that we should be celebrating and showing others? (assigned to Ted Field)
 - a. One gift is how our members treat each other. They are together after service, in small groups. New people are invited to sit with them.
 - b. We have a small base of volunteers, but they carry the load and are good at it.

Sharing Ministries with Redeemer – Ted Field, Marla Amborn

Goal is to have a combined committee of Redeemer and St. Stephen people to look at ways to share ministries. The combined committee has not met yet. Redeemer is a little behind St. Stephen in identifying their members. St. Stephen group has already put together a list of potential shared ministries. Ted wrote a term of agreement for the committee.

2024 Generosity Challenge – ALL

The council reviewed the summary of budget reductions that had been discussed at the last council meeting. The following menu was reviewed and voted on:

Administrative:

- Change trash hauler (\$300/month, April to December) \$2,700
- Send out annual financial statements, not quarterly 300

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- Reduce postage by downsizing mailing database 300
- Reduce banners and advertising 160
- Total Administrative cost reductions **\$3,460**
- Others (insurance, flowers, reduced mailings) TBD

Staff Salaries and Benefits:

- Reduce budget for new pastor \$9,500
- Convert Children Ministry Director to volunteer position 7,000
- Eliminate social security from Pastor Juli package 2,700
- Total salary reductions **\$19,200**

TOTAL MENU **\$22,660**

Discussion ensued regarding the Wednesday evening service. We agreed that it will not be eliminated. Will look for ways to improve the service. This will be an ongoing effort that we want the new pastor to be a part of.

MOTION: A motion was made by Marla Amborn and seconded by Sue Lemon to approve the above menu of budget reductions as listed. Voted on and carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Outreach Opportunity: Treehouse (TreeHousehope.org) – Ted Field

Ted presented information on a potential outreach opportunity that Redeemer and St. Stephen could share. There was an informational meeting with TreeHouse at Redeemer last week. Its mission is to end hopelessness among teens by creating Christ-centered, mental-, and health-informed ministries for today's teens. TreeHouse is looking for churches to partner with. The cost would be \$2,500 plus \$149/month for 12 months for training and implementation. This cost would be split with Redeemer. First year cost for St. Stephen would be \$2,150. TreeHouse will train a team of 3 people (one of the people would be Melissa Whitman). Would be looking for one person from St. Stephen and one person from Redeemer. Kick-off meeting would be April 29 with 12 weeks of on-line training to follow. After that, TreeHouse would help us implement the program and coach our volunteer team. The next scheduled training would be in September.

There were concerns raised by council members about the liability of working with teens who may be at risk. Council members had a lot of questions and concerns regarding this program and felt that finding a volunteer who would be appropriate for this type of program would be hard to find and the April 29 start date was too soon. It was also suggested we talk with members of the congregation who have professional experience working with teenagers who have mental health issues and other needs. Looking at September seemed a better time frame. Ted will talk with Redeemer, we are not ready to commit, there are too many questions, need time for more information.

Leasing of Church Space – Ted Field

Two separate requests were presented to council members.

- 1) Grace Fellowship Church seeks a 3-year lease to rent NHN building. Income would be around \$2,000/month. This lease, if approved, would require NHN to vacate the building. St. Stephen

has offered NHN space inside the church which would require renovation. The main question tonight is how the Council feels about leasing the building to Grace Fellowship and the impact this will have on NHN as a ministry of St. Stephen. Do we want to risk losing NHN. Mary Beth Skunes is one of the leaders in charge of NHN and gave an impassioned plea to allow NHN to stay at its current site. It has been in existence for 30 years (started by Claudette McCollar and Gerry Deland). Last year NHN gave \$19,000 to 13 community organizations which, if they ceased operations, St. Stephen would need to support these organizations from some other source. Currently leadership of NHN are 6 people, 5 of whom are members of St. Stephen. There are 55 volunteers, only 8 to 9 are St. Stephen members. Mary Beth reported why they did not want to relocate to St. Stephen: it would cost greater than \$10,000 to make the necessary updates to accommodate the space they require. It would have to be closed off, a separate entrance made, etc. Volunteers would not be comfortable being in the church, nor would many of the shoppers. Ted asked if NHN would give assurances that they would not close their doors in a year. Mary Beth stated that she did not anticipate this would happen based on their long history. Ted asked if NHN could do more to promote St. Stephen. Mary Beth stated that they could do that. There were council members who were in favor of voting to support Neighbors Helping Neighbors.

MOTION: A motion was made by Jackie Colaizy and seconded by Nancy Finley that the Council will commit to Neighbors Helping Neighbors as a mission of St. Stephen and will support their ongoing presence in their current location. The motion passed by majority vote with (5) ayes and (3) nays.

- 2) First Presbyterian Church of Cameroon seeks to use our Fellowship Hall (or on occasion the Sanctuary) for its worship services and the AB classroom for its Sunday School. We discussed an appropriate monthly rental fee. Possibly \$1,000? After discussion, it was thought a more appropriate monthly fee would be \$1,500. They have around 150 worshipers who would be present. They are looking to have their service on Sunday and after discussion, it appeared that the only appropriate time window would be a 2.5 hour window between St. Stephen service starting at 9:30 and people vacating around 11:30 am and KLM service starting at 2:00 pm. They would have musical instruments that would need to be stored somewhere. Council had questions on how the fellowship hall would be set up. Chairs would need to be set up and then taken down, the tables and chairs usually in the fellowship hall would need to be moved and then put up again. Why can't they use the sanctuary which is more suited for the large number of worshipers? Also we would assume they would want to use our kitchen for making coffee. Ted will talk with them further and find out more information on what their expectations are for how the space would be used. We did not vote on this rental request.

Communion Signup List – ALL

We did not pass a sign-up list out at today's meeting. The following names have been listed already. Office will find additional communion helpers.

Date	Server 1	Server 2	Server 3	Server 4
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			

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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 Kathy Stickler to close the Council meeting. Voted on and carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Closed with the Lord’s Prayer.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING: Monday, May 13, 2024, at 7:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Clark
Council Secretary