

## St Stephen Lutheran Church

### Church Council Meeting Minutes, May 8, 2023

Marla Amborn called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

**Present:** Patsy Olson, Marla Amborn, Ted Field, Cheryl Skrypez, Scott Zieman, Kathy Stickler, Bethany Zenner, Pastor Jim Woodruff, Phyllis Ballata, Guest Pastor Sharon Kelly, Guest Lee Branwall

**Absent:** Denise Ashley

**Devotions** – Pastor Jim

Philippians 1:3-6, 9-11 read. This is Pastor Jim's last council meeting. I am so thankful for my 30 years at St. Stephen. I'm filled with joy about this congregation. From the beginning, this has been a team effort, I never had to barge out on my own. Always someone to help with ministry, try new things, and carry them on. This is a partnership in the gospel. My prayer for the congregation is that the people will learn to love each other more and more and the congregation will continue to work together to carry out God's ministry in this place. I pray, and believe, that God will continue to be faithful to this congregation and hold you in His care.

**Prayer Concerns** – ALL

Jason Schultz. John Strand. Maris Cinis. John Rohr. Remember those who are graduating from HS and college and think of them as they choose the direction of their lives. Victims of gun violence. Marla's brother-in-law Jeff. Continue to pray about the transition at St. Stephen. Pastor Sharon Kelly.

**Approval of Minutes:** Minutes for April 2023 reviewed. No changes.

*MOTION: A motion was made by Ted Field and seconded by Cheryl Skrypez to approve the April 2023 Council minutes. Voted on and carried unanimously.*

**Adjustments to the Agenda:**

- 1) New Business
  - a. Assigning additional signers of checks and credit card

**Welcome Interim Pastor Sharon Kelly** – ALL

Approximately 30 minutes was set aside for meeting with Pastor Sharon Kelly. Contract for interim pastor position has been approved and signed by the Council Executive Committee. Contract has been completed and sent to the Synod for their signature, and they will give contract to Pastor Sharon for her signature.

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Introductions of council members and guests done. This is an informal time to talk, get to know one another, general conversation, and give and take.

Pastor Sharon provided information on her various positions over the years in addition to information on what her role would be as Interim Pastor at St. Stephen: My role is to work closely with the elected church leaders, and work with the members of the Mission Exploration Team who are developing the Ministry Site Profile. Must have takeaway from interim: how to say hello very well and how to say goodbye very well. I need to do ministry. At her recently completed interim position, she and congregation members visited care centers during Lent which was very nice and resulted in some new people becoming part of the congregation. Her first day will be Sunday July 2.

### **Treasurer's Report** – Patsy Olson

(See treasurers report)

Balance Sheet: Total cash assets: Checking \$65,985.10. Savings \$32,872.92. CDs totaling \$48,377.19. Endowment fund \$25,680.95. Total Current Assets \$172,916.16.

Benevolence Fund: Total Income: \$7,243.87. April Expenses: Synod \$1,000; Journal entry every month Lukani \$300, Tecate \$100. Total Expenses \$5,600.00. Net income balance of \$1,643.87.

Capital Fund: No information provided for capital fund this month.

Cash Reserve Fund: Total income \$41,547.37.

Current Fund: Income: Carryover Balance NEG -\$16,340.91. Income received from the beginning of the year amounted to a Net Income of \$84,749.16. Expenses: Total Expenses were \$130,448.51. This results in a Total Net Income of NEG -\$45,699.35.

Patsy reported that comparison to same time last year, we are only approximately \$20,000 off.

### Special Designated Funds:

Special Designated Accts \$19,178.16. General Funding Accts \$14,982.88. Tanzania Accts \$13,525.32. Tecate Accts \$0.00. Special Designated Memorial Accts \$15,898.99.  
**Total Balance** \$63,585.35.

### Additional Discussion –

- 1) Special Designated Accounts – Pastor Jim and Patsy went through all the special designated accts. Patsy will make notes in all the accounts to include:
  - a. Person identified who oversees authorizing use of each fund. That person will be called if the church wishes to use funds from that account.

b. The date that each fund began.

2) Patsy set up Pastor Sharon Kelly into the payroll system.

*MOTION: A motion was made by Cheryl Skrypez and seconded by Phyllis Ballata to approve the April 2023 Treasurer's Report. Voted on and carried unanimously.*

#### **Pastors' Reports** – Pastor Jim Woodruff and Pastor Juli Thompson

Pastor Jim's report provided. Tami wants him to reflect on his time for the last 30 years. Some things he is pleased with:

- 1) Relationship with Lukani. It has been a blessing to both us and Lukani but also to the Iringa diocese. 30 people from our congregation have visited Lukani since our first visit.
- 2) Positive congregational response when we did the stained-glass window project in the sanctuary. We had contacted several people, but none ever seemed right. Then Wendell Peck ran into a group at the State Fair. We went with them. Love the flow of the stories in the windows.
- 3) Got started with Tecate and I hope we will send another mission trip.
- 4) Outdoor ministry (north lawn services, live nativity).
- 5) Will plant 5 trees on the north lawn.
- 6) This congregation has been a joy to be a part of. People here are active participants of the life of the congregation.
- 7) I faithfully proclaimed the gospel over the years.

Pastor Juli's report for April is included.

#### **Ministry Team Reports** – ALL

##### Fellowship – Cheryl Skrypez

Team is working on Pastor Jim retirement party. Cheryl passed around a list of jobs for council members to sign up for either Saturday (set-up and decorating) or Sunday, the day of party.

##### Congregational and Community Care – Phyllis Ballata

Phyllis gave an update on what has been going on with the **Isaiah Project**. She provided a brief description of the program. It is an inter-denominational group, not all Christian, many different faith communities. They work together on projects they feel are important in areas of the community and common good. Recently have been working with the legislature. The following areas of concern to Isaiah Project that PASSED in the legislature included:

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- 1) 100% Clean Energy Bill.
- 2) Restore the Vote. Felons released from prison are able to vote again.
- 3) Driver's License for All. Everyone should be able to get a driver's license, it's not same as a REAL ID, just a driver's license. Not tied to person's immigration status.
- 4) Automatic Voter Registration. This goes along with getting a driver's license (if you are a citizen).
- 5) Universal School Meals.

Areas of concern that didn't pass yet:

- 1) Paid Family Medical Leave.
- 2) Transit Funding.
- 3) Childcare Funding.
- 4) MinnesotaCare Public Option.

Phyllis described the group as made up of other churches. This Thursday, there will be a meeting with WBL City Manager to find out issues in WBL and if there is something our group can help them with. Mostly getting to know people of responsibility in the community.

**Dinner Church** has had the same 5 people coming. So, it was decided to put dinner church on hold for now and find other ways for outreach.

### Adult Learning – Scott Zieman

Scott is still looking for topics. He has a relative who is from the Minnesota Beef Council. He has introduced beef cattle to many countries that have never had beef cattle before. He is an interesting guy and this topic could interest people. Would this be a good topic? Council thought yes. Cheryl said that adult forums usually are held during the church year and not during the summer. Other topics that will be needed are interim pastor process updates.

### Property – Kathy Stickler

Kathy was not able to be at the May 6 Clean Up day. Asked how it went. Betsy said there were around 9 people participating. Outside crew focused on the parking lot and lawn raking in the main parking area. Had around 6 people working on parking lot, raking and around 3 people inside the church.

Boy scouts are coming May 16 to continue with outdoor cleanup. Ken Olson will take leaf pile to yard waste collection site.

*MOTION: A motion was made by Patsy Olson and seconded by Bethany Zenner to approve the Pastors' Reports and Ministry Team Reports. Voted on and carried unanimously.*

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Congregational Visitor Lee Branwall – Marla**

Lee is concerned with the future of the church; specifically, the process of having interim pastor, getting call committee. Concern is the time that it takes. Based on the way that we are going, will be a long time. Many people he has talked to are concerned with how long it will take to get a pastor. Biggest concern is if it isn't done in a really timely manner, we will lose a lot of people. How we handle this is key. Lee talked to Dan Brumm, he convinced Lee to follow the synod recommendation. As time went on, he came to disagree with Dan. Some things about the process so far have been positive; specifically communications to the church members (Marla's updates). Communication is an important part of keeping people from leaving the church. They are more likely to stay. April Steppingstone said 15 to 24 month process. Lee finds that unacceptable. Much too long of a period. He wants us to have a goal of having a new Pastor in place by the end of 2023. It's unfortunate that Pastor Sharon can't start until July. He wants interim pastor to start while Jim is still here so there can be a learning process. Marla stated that the Synod rule is that an interim pastor cannot start until the retiring pastor leaves. Synod guidance around this is based on experience with many congregations over the years. Their goal is that we should be successful. If you rush it, that can cause problems. We don't want to drag it out. But we need to go through the steps. First, we must have a celebration of Pastor Jim's ministry. We plan to begin in June with the ministry site profile even though Sharon won't start until July.

Lee asked what the ministry site profile entailed. It describes who we are as a congregation. There are many specific questions, about 15 pages. Not just bureaucracy. The document assists the Synod with identifying who would be a good fit. Helps us with putting down in writing what our mission is, and what gifts we are looking for in the person and who can help us with our mission. Any pastoral candidate will look at that profile and decide if our church is a good fit or not. Marla knows how important this document is as she was an incoming pastor at Immanuel. They did not prepare well, and it took Marla a couple of years to work things out. Our Mission Exploration Team will have an important job. Lee hopes they do their job in an expeditious manner so we can move into the call committee process as soon as possible.

Patsy described the process that her church in Wisconsin went through. They originally lost their pastor of 25 years. They did not take their time planning for two different pastoral transition times. So much infighting; the congregation wanted to run things. The pastors did not stay. Now things have stabilized.

When Cheryl was greeter at Redeemer on Good Friday, she talked to a member of Redeemer who was also a greeter. Redeemer's process to find a new pastor took 2

years. This person didn't say if anyone had left during the process. Their worshiping community is a little larger than St. Stephen.

The process of being able to find appropriate candidates can take time. Depends on who is available and when they may become available. You can go through the process several times during the call process and think you have the right person but then the candidate does not want to come. Must start over. The better job we do on the ministry site profile the better the synod will know who is a good fit.

We need to address the salary of the pastor. We need to be at synod guidelines.

We want to speed the process up, but we don't want to reduce quality. We got a jump start at the visioning retreat. We are also going to be holding small group meetings and do a survey of the congregation. When you are involving the congregation in the process, that doesn't send them away but keeps them engaged so they can participate in the process and stay.

Relationships continue, God is clearly at work in this congregation and will continue.

Mission Exploration Team – Cindy Scott (chair), Robin Eberlein, Cheryl Skrypez, Ted Field, Marla Amborn, Betsy Clark. Marla has asked Lee Branwall to join the team but he has not provided an answer yet. Marla will follow up with him tomorrow.

#### **Report on Synod Workshop - Kathy Stickler**

Kathy and Robin Eberlein participated in the Synod workshop, "Reaching Outside Our Walls". The seminar was held at Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church. She was pleasantly surprised who attended. Really diverse set of people there – pastors, a few council members, the Bishop. We are all in this transitional mode. We have aging members. St. Stephen is not the only church going through transition. People are taking a different look at things. Justin Grimm is good at looking at things differently. We need to be a welcoming church. Kathy doesn't think we are that welcoming. Hospitality is the practice of seeing and removing the barriers that make people feel like outsiders. All these different pieces that we can work on. What can we do to be proactive when we see new people in our church? But how do we not scare people. Christ the Servant has a hospitality committee that has seminars on how to approach people. Marla asked Kathy if she and Robin would get a small group together to work on the information from this seminar.

**ACTION:** Kathy and Robin will present info from this seminar at next month's council meeting.

**ADDED: Additional Signers of Checks and Credit Card** – Pastor Jim

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We did not get to this added agenda item because of time constraints. Will need to tackle this task during the week. No council approval is needed to assign new signers.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Interim Pastor Process** – Marla

Pastor Sharon Kelly will start July 2. Will plan on meet and greet reception following Sunday service on July 9.

**Council Highlights**

- Interim Pastor Sharon Kelly met with Council. Her first day will be July 2.
- Guest Lee Branwall expressed concern about potential length of interim process.
- Mission Exploration Team will begin working on the ministry site profile the beginning of June.
- Ministry exploration members – list all of them.
- Kathy Stickler and Robin Eberlein attended the synod workshop “Reaching Outside our Walls” and have many ideas of things we can start using here at St. Stephen.

**Council Picture** – Taken tonight. Missing from picture: Ted Field and Denise Ashley. Ted Field needed to leave the meeting early tonight.

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

**Meeting adjourned at 9:03 pm**

**Closed with the Lord’s Prayer**

**NEXT COUNCIL MEETING: June 12, 7:00 pm**

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Clark