

St Stephen Lutheran Church
Church Council Meeting Minutes, October 8, 2023

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

Present: Marla Amborn (President), Ted Field (Vice President), Cheryl Skrypez, Phyllis Ballata, Denise Ashley, Interim Pastor Sharon Kelly, Scott Ziemann, Bethany Zenner, Mary Beth Skunes (Treasurer). Guest Jill Sandvik

Absent: Kathy Stickler

Devotion – Pastor Kelly

PK read an excerpt from the chapter “Radical Hospitality” from the book “Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations” by Robert Schnase. Each month, she will share an excerpt.

Prayer Concerns –ALL

Pastor Juli met with Kris Vollmer and stepson Will regarding Genene Peterson passing. PK met with Peggy Schaaf regarding Ted Schaaf passing. Funerals being planned. Prayers for Diane Swanson. Prayers for all those in Israel.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes for September 2023 reviewed prior to the meeting. No changes noted.

MOTION: A motion was made by Cheryl Skrypez and seconded by Denise Ashley to approve the September 2023 Council minutes. Voted on and carried unanimously.

Adjustments to the Agenda: None

REPORTS:

Treasurer’s Report – Mary Beth Skunes (Treasurer)

The Treasurer’s Report was made available for review by the council members. Mary Beth brought up issues that needed to be addressed:

1. Health insurance package needs to be submitted by October 13. Silver+ B is being used currently. Health Care went up, disability went down. Tami had a slight increase for each month. Pastor Kelly’s went down slightly. Mary Beth recommends we stay with this program.
MOTION: A motion was made by Marla Amborn and seconded by Ted Field to continue with the Silver+ B health care program from Portico. Voted on and carried unanimously.
2. Our CD valued at \$17,698.04 is coming due in 10 days. Mary Beth recommends that we move the CD into our existing money market account (Fund 12). The other CDs aren’t coming due until after January of next year.
MOTION: A motion was made by Phyllis Ballata and seconded by Bethany Zenner to transfer the CD valued at \$17,698.04 into our Fund 12 money market account. Voted on and carried unanimously.
3. 4th quarter giving expectations – Mary Beth did an analysis for the stewardship committee regarding who has given so far and what is left to come in based on giving patterns and pledges yet to be fulfilled. She expects October through December regular giving will be around \$90,000. Also will be expecting money from the Auction, Thanksgiving and Christmas services. We are

expecting a negative balance at the end of the year. Council needs to be aware of this. The congregation got a letter with their contribution report that was mailed stating that the church was expecting a deficit.

4. Mary Beth reminded Council we are entering the time when we are making the budget for 2024. Mary Beth has put last quarter's financials in each ministry team's boxes. Wants everyone to review this data and double check expenses that have occurred and whether they look accurate. Also look at what you anticipate the expense budget will be for 2024.

Action items:

- Ministry teams and council liaisons will bring back 2024 budget recommendations. Have this ready for the next council meeting. Do earlier if possible.
- Assess what to do about staff salaries and whether to offer a raise.
- Need to put together a financial packet to offer potential lead pastor candidates. We need a salary range on the Ministry Site Profile (can be a range depending on years of service).

PK asked if there is a voucher made for any expense request. Mary Beth said that there is.

Marla asked Mary Beth how things were going. Mary Beth said still working out the kinks. The council thanked Mary Beth for her work.

Mary Beth mentioned that bookkeeper and treasurer share the same email. If there is something you want addressed by Mary Beth quickly, or if the subject matter is sensitive, use Mary Beth's personal email (tmskunes@msn.com).

Pastors' Reports – Interim Pastor Sharon Kelly and Pastor Juli Thompson

Reports from Pastors Kelly and Thompson included for review.

PK said that while Pastor Juli was on vacation and ill, PK made a lot of the hospital visits. Takes a lot of time, taking into account drive time, parking, visiting, etc. Confirmation Sunday - Two kids from two households will be confirmed at Redeemer and two kids from two households at St. Stephen. Every kid will be confirmed but it was not how we had originally hoped. Outcome of it being split between churches is difficult. Suggestion: healing is needed regarding this issue. We needed more communication to our households during Pastor Jim's tenure. He made it clear to PK that the service would be at St. Stephen at 11:00 am. Best scenario would have been for Pastor Jim to remind the council and all regarding this. PK wants to give thanks to Melissa at the Redeemer combined thanksgiving worship service – give thanks for Melissa's 10 years of service at St. Stephen and currently at Redeemer. She also wants to give thanks for Pastor Juli's 7 years of service, and Tami's ten years of service. Both Juli and Tami will be gone over the Thanksgiving holiday, so Marla suggested doing something at St. Stephen for them both at a later time. Makes sense for doing Melissa at Redeemer. Perhaps gift certificate and card at the service for each person.

Baptism of Shawn Stegner grandchildren at Wednesday service October 11.

Ministry Team Reports – ALL

Worship/Music – Denise Ashley

Denise was not at last meeting. Report was submitted but there is not anything specific that needs to be mentioned at today's council meeting.

Fellowship – Cheryl.

Pat Miles event went very well. Volunteers were impressed with the event. There were around 122 people who attended. Next event is this Saturday, Music Festival and Auction.

Fools For Christ – Scott Zieman

Dinner theater at St. Stephen, "Book of Matthew" October 27, 28. Everyone is practicing hard. Tickets are selling pretty well.

Children and Youth – Bethany Zenner

Bethany didn't have anything else to add. Confirmation service already discussed.

Congregational and Community Care – Phyllis Ballata

Phyllis gave an update on the Isaiah Project. They are currently going through a listening process right now. Phyllis conducted a listening session and Pastor Juli will be doing one soon. The last time this process was done was 2017. The purpose is to take ideas from thousands of people from MN to establish what their legislative agenda will be. These ideas will be presented to the State Legislature.

Stewardship – Ted Field

November 12 is Stewardship Sunday. Packet will be mailed before November 1. Several of the stewardship members have been attending online workshops, starting in August, geared toward helping churches build a culture of generosity. Goal is improving stewardship campaign. We have lots of good information to use in our messages we send out. Classes will continue after stewardship Sunday, focusing on what to do next. We decided to change how we run our stewardship campaign, and the timing of this workshop was opportune. We are feeling optimistic about the program. It is geared toward increasing stewardship response. We hope that is what happens here, we are hoping for a greater number of pledges than before. Even if we don't see a financial benefit, we will have a better stewardship message, a more biblical and less "financial" message.

MOTION: A motion was made by Denise Ashley and seconded by Cheryl Skrypez to approve the Pastors Reports and Ministry Team Reports. Voted on and carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

Updating interior of church – Jill Sandvik

Decorating committee re-gathered a couple of months ago based on PK wanting the church appearance improved to those watching online. Committee members: Jill Sandvik (chair), Denise Ashley, Anne Jackson, Brenda Steady, Kathy Anderson, Karen Smith, Darlene Birkland, and Cheryl Skrypez on committee. They welcome more people.

The committee had been formed prior to COVID. Two things that were done were the pews recovered and new carpet placed in sanctuary. Jill is here tonight with the council to ask for formal approval to address décor in sanctuary, address what is seen online. Some long-range items – sanctuary to allow musical groups to have more space.

The agenda for their first meeting coming up – ID list of areas that need attention and prioritize that list and make recommendation to council or exec committee depending on timing. Also they will come up with a proposed budget, where money would come from (some may not cost money). First priority Jill said that the street numbers outside are falling down, that will get fixed.

Questions: People are getting upset seeing things come down and it seems like things are just happening. It was suggested tonight that if changes are being made, make it known to the congregation of those changes before they take place. Jill agreed that the committee needs to step lightly, some changes need to be made gently; however, it doesn't mean that changes aren't going to happen. We have people on the committee that know the history of things. The council discussed that this committee needs to work closely with Property and Worship and Music. If there are things that have been donated, consult the person who donated it. The committee knows that they do have to be sensitive regarding removing things that have been present for many years. Shouldn't just suddenly disappear, people should be told.

We do need to address the floor in the sanctuary, different levels, constant trip danger. PK reminded that Property needs to be involved in structural changes. Lighting in sanctuary was addressed a few years ago.

Goal: Jill would like this committee to do as much as possible before new pastor comes to the building. They will divide up recommendations into high, medium, and low priority items. However, new pastor may want some decisions on some changes.

We discussed that this committee should be sanctioned by council. Denise wants to come up with a better name. Committee should come to council with a prioritized plan and proposed budget. The council should not micromanage the committee, but the council should take responsibility if there is pushback from any members on decisions made by the committee that people aren't happy with. The committee will come back to council with information at next council meeting in November. They can also meet with executive committee if they need something addressed more quickly.

Council approved the committee going forward with it's plans.

Church Use Request – Ted Field

Ted met with Rev Thomas Dowie of Kingdom Restoration Ministries, Intl recently. His church is looking for a place to worship, specifically a place of worship. Ted met with him, learned about the mission of his church, and what he is looking for. Space for 5 people, with intention to grow over time. Similar to our relationship with the small Catholic congregation who rented space several years ago. Tami said that we just asked for a donation to help with utility bills. We gave one person the code to the key box. Will need to draw up some terms of condition, space allowed, limit size of worshippers, if you have 30-40 people, talk about revising terms. Ted was impressed with Rev Dowie as a person, his life story, the mission of the church not in misalignment with our church's mission.

In sanctuary, what items would be used? Cheryl had lots of questions about use of paraments, other altar requirements. For the other church, we did have to move stuff on the altar and move it back. We need to tell them which nights are not available. Sunday nights could be the best – but since Christmas Eve is on a Sunday this year St. Stephen has already planned worship times and will need use of our sanctuary at those times on Christmas Eve. What space do they want to use? We have some questions regarding paraments or what is on the altar. Ted will meet with him again to talk about more detailed information. Denise - Any legal contract needed? If things don't go well, do we have the ability to terminate the contract without term?

Action: Ted will draw up an agreement

MOTION: A motion was made by Marla Amborn and seconded by Scott Zieman to allow Kingdom Restoration Ministries, Intl, and Rev Thomas Dowie to use our facility with an appropriate signed agreement between St. Stephen and Kingdom Restoration. The agreement will be revisited annually. Voted on and carried unanimously.

Card to Deposit in Offering – Ted Field

Stewardship struggled with this task. What is it for? The passing of the plate is still a meaningful part of the worship service. Promotes gesture of stewardship, giving a gift. Considered basket at outside of sanctuary versus passing of the plate. Perhaps the Pastor should explain why plate is coming by empty because bulk of our congregation gives by alternative methods. The church offers people multiple ways of giving, including passing of the plate. There is strong symbolism in passing the plate and we want to continue the practice. We will not be coming up with a card to place in the plate.

Wednesday meals – Betsy Clark

Betsy was tasked with talking with Jodie about coming up with a plan to train others in how to cook certain meals. Betsy has not had a chance to talk with Jodie about this yet. Place it on next month's agenda.

Mission Exploration Team Update – Members of the team

Had a congregational meeting summarizing cottage meeting results. Holy Cow on-line survey has started. Cindy Scott gave announcements in church last Sunday. Team working on candidates for call committee. Hope to get MSP done in December. Get call committee active at the same time, goal to

meet with candidates first of the year. Survey goes on until November 6. Interpretation of results will be done by Holy Cow with council and MET members mid-November.

Council Highlights

1. The decoration committee will be working on facility improvements. If you have suggestions for improvements, contact Jill Sandvik, committee chair. Committee members are: Jill Sandvik (chair), Denise Ashley, Anne Jackson, Brenda Steady, Kathy Anderson, Karen Smith, Darlene Birkland, and Cheryl Skrypez.
2. Everyone is encouraged to complete the on-line congregation survey. You will be getting several reminders to take it. Please take it only once. Deadline for taking it is November 6.
3. Our devotion at council was on Hospitality as a fruitful practice of congregational life.
4. We affirmed our historic practice of passing the offering plate as a response to God's word.
5. We had a great turnout for the Pat Miles event, there were approximately 122 participants.

Motion to adjourn. Cheryl, Phyllis. Meeting ended 9:00 pm

Communion signup list – Marla forgot to bring the list. She will email it to council members to sign up.

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm

Closed with the Lord's Prayer

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING: Monday, November 13, 2023, at 7:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Betsy Clark
Council Secretary