

Agenda
Congregational Council
St. John's Lutheran Church
March 24th, 2026

1. Devotions (15 minutes) on Walter Brueggemann's *The Prophetic Imagination* pp. 9-19.

2. Approval of February Minutes

3. Financial Report

See addendum #1 (below) for Treasurer's Report.

4. Action Items

Property and Grounds Board has requested that Council approve masonry repairs of the steps on the East and South staircases (quote of \$9,640 from Top Dawg Masonry).

Foundation Funds Request: St. John's WELCA is seeking funding of \$2,000 to support its ministry on behalf of Global Health Ministries (GHM) and Lutheran World Relief (LWR). The money will be used to purchase materials to build personal care kits, baby care kits and school kits for LWR recipients as well as for newborn kits and hospice kits distributed by GHM to those in need around the world.

5. Discussion Items

What constitutes a "Discussion Item" for Council? How are these to be distinguished from "Board Updates?"

Worship and Arts Board has requested that Council discuss the balcony space along with a possible addition to the bylaws allowing for the decommissioning of musical instruments after their useful life. Can the decommissioning of instruments follow the current procedure – i.e., Worship and Arts Board makes a specific recommendation to the Council, which then votes on the matter – or is there a need for a new procedure?

Stewardship Board has requested that Council discuss plans for the volunteer opportunity information table on May 17th.

The Synod has requested that all churches incorporate their bylaws into their constitution to create one interwoven document. How shall we proceed? (Steve Reece)

January and February offerings are markedly down this year. Shall we send an update to the congregation beyond the usual quarterly updates? (Pastor Fickenscher)

There are still some security concerns about the entrances to the church building and also some possible remedies. (Pastor Fickenscher)

6. Pastors' Report

See addendum #2 (below) for Pastors' Report.

a. Pastor Fickenscher

b. Pastor Davis

7. Board Updates

8. Old Business

9. New Business

10. Future Dates

CPR/First Aid Training on April 9th, 8:30 am -12:30 pm

Board Meetings on April 14th, 7 pm

Spring Cleanup on April 25th (not on the 28th, as previously announced)

Council Meeting on April 28th, 7 pm

Addendum #1: Treasurer's Financial Report for February, 2026:

Total Operating Income is (\$39k) below budget for the month of February, and (\$67k) below budget YTD through February.

- Offering:
 - February offering was (\$32k) below budget.
 - February YTD offering is (\$50k) below budget.
 - 2026 February YTD offering is about (\$25k) below 2025 YTD offering through February.
- Other Income
 - February YTD combined "Other Income" and "other Gifts" on budget.
 - February YTD Designated and Foundation Funds are (\$17k) below budget.

Total Operating Expense is (\$6k) below budget for February, and (\$33k) below budget YTD through February.

- Personnel was (\$6k) below budget for February and (\$13k) below budget YTD. Because of the timing of how salaries are paid, there will be one month where salaries are doubled up and this should be on target by year end.
- All other Board expense categories were (\$2k) below budget for February and (\$20k) below budget YTD.
- We are still waiting for the savings from the Solar Panels to show up on our utility bills.

Net Income/(loss)

- Net Income for February is (\$32K) below budget, and (\$33k) below budget YTD.

YTD offering is (\$50k) below budget through February. This is a concern. I think we should see what offering is through Easter and evaluate at that time if a communication to the congregation regarding the shortfall would be prudent.

St. John's received a solar tax credit check in the amount of \$59,369 from the IRS. Many, many thanks to Janell Martin for sharing her time and significant expertise in working through the arduous process of getting this done!!!

It should be noted how expenses regarding Pastor Pam's 2026 sabbatical will be met.

There are three areas of sabbatical expenses to be addressed.

1. Ongoing salary – this will be met through ongoing regular, budgeted payroll
2. Costs for additional pastoral support during Pam's sabbatical – Estimated at \$9k, these expenses will be partially met through the additional \$6k budgeted in "Educational Costs" in the 2026 budget. This leaves a \$3k shortfall to be addressed.
3. Program costs (tuition and travel) for Pastor Pam's sabbatical – estimated at \$2.5k, funding for this expense is part of the shortfall that needs to be addressed.

This total 2026 budget shortfall of about \$5.5 k will be addressed and met by an accumulated, uncommitted excess residing in the "Education" component within Designated Funds, which as of 2/28/2026, has a balance of \$13,528.

Of these funds, \$4,000 is "held" for Nathan, \$1,000 for Julie, \$1,000 for Pastor Pam, \$1,000 for Pastor Jonathan, \$500 for Kristin and \$315 for Sally (for a total of \$7,815). This leaves \$5,713 for assistance in covering the shortfall in the 2026 budget for Pastor Pam's sabbatical.

It should also be noted that costs for covering an anticipated sabbatical for Pastor Jonathan in 2027 should be included and built into the 2027 budgeting process.

Addendum #2: Pastors' Report for March, 2026:

Staff:

Kristin Partlo will be leaving us to do a pastoral internship at United Lutheran Church in Red Wing in August. We are recommending that a farewell and thank-you reception for her take place on Sunday July 19. The youth and stewardship boards can work together to host this time after worship.

Worship:

Lenten service attendance has been very robust – almost as much as Sunday attendance. We're grateful to this year's speakers: Paul Beck, Gordy Moore, Rusty Kluver, Susan Lohmann and Ankya Rychner

For the first time in my tenure at St. John's, we had to cancel all of a Sunday mornings' activities due to the blizzard on March 15. Thanks to Dave Zdenek and KYMN for the flexibility in finding a previous broadcast to run. We were pleased with the attendance at both the Zoom Service of the Word (around 70 devices) and the Palm Sunday path forum (around 60 devices).

CYF

The job opening for our Director of Ministry with Youth and Families was posted on March 2nd. So far, we have two applicants. The hiring team will begin reviewing applications on March 30th, with interviews beginning in April.

St. John's will be partnering with Bethel Lutheran Church again on VBS this year. VBS will be in early August, which is a little later than usual. This year we will be bringing in staff from Good Earth Village to help run the program.

Sabbatical planning:

Pastor Katie Fick will be filling in an average of 15 hours/week during Pam's sabbatical from July 26-October 16.

Stephen Ministry

Eight new Stephen Ministers will be commissioned on April 26th at second service. This brings our total number to 165 Stephen Ministers trained at St. John's since the 1980s.

Rev. Alan Storey

Rev. Alan Storey will be coming to Northfield during the week of April 20th-26th - we hope you will find an opportunity to hear him speak. There are many opportunities available!

Beyond St. John's

The crisis mode from the ICE surge in Minnesota has abated somewhat, but the financial needs continue. A regular gathering of community leaders has been happening weekly on Zoom to assess needs, with a big focus now being on rental assistance. We have helped with some individual needs through our pastors' emergency fund.

Pam was interviewed by two publications about the community response during the surge.

The first was on caregiving:

<https://19thnews.org/2026/02/minnesota-mutual-aid-caregiving-ice-resistance/>

The second was with a group of community leaders in Northfield meeting with a journalist from the American Prospect. We have not seen anything published from that conversation yet.

Pam and Jonathan took part in Kiara Jorgensen's St. Olaf class on Christian ecotheology on March 12, working with a group of pastors.

Pam has been on the core clergy team for Isaiah planning this year, including lots of conversations about Palm Sunday's mass procession in Saint Paul. As of this writing 88 St. John's members are signed up to ride the bus together to the Capitol on March 29, and many other Northfield churches are participating as well.

Pam presented on the Palm Sunday path at the Cannon River conference meeting on March 12. On April 16 St. John's will be hosting the conference gathering – this is all rostered leaders in our portion of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod.