

**Agenda
Congregational Council
St. John's Lutheran Church
September 23rd, 2025**

1. Devotions (15 minutes) on Chapters 9-10 of *Strength to Love*

2. Approval of August Minutes

3. Financial Report

4. Action Items

Naming of Budget Committee.

5. Discussion Items

The Property and Grounds Board seeks guidance from Council about whether St John's should install a stairlift to the choir loft. Dan Hanson will provide details.

Revisions to the lists of Boards' responsibilities in the bylaws: please continue to send final revisions to Steve Reece (reece@stolaf.edu), who will compile them into one document. Revisions have been received from the following boards: Faith and Health Board; Adult Ministry and Education Board; Stewardship Board; Worship and Arts Board; Benevolence and Social Concerns Board.

Update on Sustaining Grace projects, especially on the benevolence side (Pastor Fickenscher).

Update of the activities of the Isaiah project, especially on the public aspect of it (Pastor Fickenscher).

Discussion about the challenges of recruiting and maintaining board members and chairs.

How should the St. John's Constitution be revised to accommodate the changes required and recommended by the ELCA at the recent Churchwide Assembly?

6. Pastors' Report

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

a. Pastor Fickenscher

b. Pastor Davis

7. Old Business

8. New Business

9. Future Dates

Board Night: Tuesday, October 14th, 7 pm

Council Meeting: Tuesday, October 28th, 7 pm

Addendum #1: St. John's August 2025 Treasurer's Financial Report:

To be provided . . .

Addendum #2: September 2025 Pastors' Report

Worship

The two service schedule resumed with the start of Sunday School on September 14. We are happy to have a very full balcony with the Chorale having 40-50 singers each week. There are six St. Olaf church music interns joining us as well, five singing with Chorale and one working with the Rejoice Ringers.

CYF

Children, Youth, and Family ministries have had a number of gatherings to get people oriented to the start of the year – *6th grade Confirmation Orientation* for new 6th graders and their parents, and then *Connections Night* for both Children and Youth Programming. *Connections Night* is feeling less and less effective in getting families together for an orientation meeting, especially those with young families. We will brainstorm a new approach for next year.

On September 17th, we had a great start to the program year! Children's ministry helped packed School Kits with other St. John's Adult volunteers through WELCA. Confirmation and Youth Group had about 31 youth gather for the first night, which is a great start to the year.

Pastor Jonathan has established a taskforce for our youth position that will be open a year from now. Eden Kaiser, Suzy Taggart, Alyssa Toov, and Peter Becker Nelson have agreed to serve on this ad hoc committee to help vision and plan for filling this position next year. We will hopefully have our first gathering in October.

Sustaining Grace

It has been a slow summer getting bids for SG projects but we have made some progress:

- The new range and oven was delivered this morning! While it looks like a simple 1-1 replacement, the new model has safer and more energy efficient pilots that will save energy over the old model.
- Our lighting test last week was successful. New LED's will be many times brighter than our current fixtures, and more energy efficient as well.
- We should be receiving a second bid for the parking lot soon. It's unclear whether this project can be completed before asphalt plants close November 1.
- The bell tower inspection showed some need for tuckpointing but no serious structural concerns (whew!)

Admin:

The new Pushpay link is up and running on our website. There will be a general announcement about it to the congregation next week, and we hope to get our current Vanco givers converted to the new platform in about a month. The company has provided a lot of customer support to Leah for the process and things are going well.

The Nominating Committee is beginning its work, first identifying a President-Elect and six board chairs for next year. Dan Franklin will chair the group and Sue Evenson will be serving as recorder. They will be meeting weekly and are happy to hear suggestions for asks (but please let *them* do the asking!) Other members of the committee are Peter Skoglund, Kristy Harms, and Christy Hall-Holt.

Advocacy

In response to recent events, Bishop Eaton has urged people of the ELCA to engage in 'active civic engagement'. Bishop Eaton writes, "In this moment, I urge all of us in this church to embrace God's call, to hear and embody the good news of Jesus Christ and to fulfill our roles as peacemakers through active civic engagement." (*A Message from Bishop Eaton on Political Violence*) and "To meet this moment, God calls us to advocacy." (*ELCA Statement on Supreme Court Ruling That Allows Racial Profiling in Immigration Enforcement.*)

St. John's has gathered up postcards through the Amparero program that will be sent to the ELCA advocacy offices in support of immigrants in this moment. Thanks to Jane Rinehart and other WELCA leaders for spearheading this effort.

We took part in the ringing of Northfield church bells for eight minutes on September 16 to memorialize the 84,000 persons killed in Gaza since the war began nearly two years ago. This effort was modeled on a similar event in Scandinavia a few months ago. Thanks to Doug Johnson and Rick Hillert for sharing in the long ring.

Isaiah, a coalition of Protestant Christian and Muslim faith communities, is organizing to encourage our state and federal lawmakers to defend civil and human rights and protect our social safety nets. A statewide clergy gathering this Thursday and a meeting with Governor Walz is the start of planning a path forward to speak together out of our faith values. While Isaiah has been active for many years in this state, more clergy and lay leaders are engaging this year because of the rise of Christian nationalism and the assault on constitutional rights. Todd Lippert has been organizing small town clergy this year. Bishop Hassanally is taking part in Thursday's meeting with the governor as well.