

Congregational Council
St. John's Lutheran Church
April 26, 2022 | 7:00 p.m. via ZOOM

Members: Pr. Pam Fickenscher, Pr. Jonathan Davis, Paul Beck, Marilyn Calcutt, Rod Christensen, Dale Gehring, Mark Gleason, Candace Godfrey, Trish Goodrich, Kristy Harms, Tamara Jackman, Dennis Rinehart, Jane Rizzo, Kathleen Shea, Jerry Ugland

Present: Pr. Pam Fickenscher, Pr. Jonathan Davis, Paul Beck, Marilyn Calcutt, Rod Christensen, Mark Gleason, Candace Godfrey, Trish Goodrich, Kristy Harms, Dennis Rinehart, Tamara Jackman, Jerry Ugland, Kathleen Shea

Not Present: Jane Rizzo, Dale Gehring

Meeting was called to order at 7:02pm

1. Opening devotion and prayer offered by Jane Rizzo (read by Rod Christensen)
2. Motion by Kristy Harms to approve minutes from March 22, 2022. Seconded by Dennis Rinehart. Motion carried unanimously.
3. Financial Report – provided by Jane Rizzo, summarized by Rod Christensen
 - a. No items needing special attention at this time
4. Motion by Paul Beck to approve the March financial report. Seconded by Kristy Harms. The motion carried unanimously.
5. Council Updates & Action Items
 - a. **Support Expense Funding for Pr. Jonathan's sabbatical (7/11/22 - 10/3/22)**
 - i. Council discussed the need for support expenses, such as guest preachers and visitation needs. Pr. Pam estimates that we need approximately \$1,300 for guest preaching costs and for planned visitation, but it would be nice to have extra for a cushion for unforeseen needs (visitation support can be hard to predict).
 - ii. Rod Christensen suggests that we make a motion to authorize an expenditure of **up to \$3,000** for support cost for Pr. Jonathan's sabbatical as allocated by Pr. Pam: **\$1,912** would come from the **Designated Funds / Church Council / Education Fund** and the remainder if necessary from the **Designated Funds / Church Council / 2021 Budget Surplus (currently \$13, 299)**. Motion by Jerry Ugland, seconded by Mark Gleason. Motion passes unanimously.
 - b. **2022 Southeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly - Affirmation of Additional Voting Members**
 - i. St. John's can send up to four lay voting members to the 2022 Southeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly. Two were elected at the annual meeting (Suzanne

Pfau and Kristin Partlo), and two more members have since expressed interest (Rod Christensen and Christy Hall-Holt).

- ii. Pr. Pam recommends that we affirm **Rod Christensen** and **Christy Hall-Holt** as our 3rd and 4th voting members for the 2022 Southeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly. Motion by Dennis Rinehart, seconded by Jerry Ugland. Motion passes unanimously.

c. **Safe Operating Committee update**

- i. Rod Christensen provided a brief summary of the most recent meeting and recommendations. Current plan is to “stay the course”. Council has no additional comments.

6. Pastor’s Report – Pr. Pam Fickenscher - included in the materials for the Council meeting

- a. **Action Item for the Columbarium:** The columbarium, which is overseen by a congregational committee of three people, is in transition. We are thankful to Char Carlson and John Ferguson for many years of service in this group and for overseeing the building of the second unit which will provide us space for some time to come. Succeeding board members are Scott Swanson and Ruth Neuger. Pr. Pam asks for Council’s approval today for the appointment of **Ruth Anglin** to the Columbarium Congregational Committee for a term of 2022-2028. Motion by Paul Beck, seconded by Mark Gleason. Motion passes unanimously.
- b. Zach Pelletier has announced that he is stepping back as Bell Choir director this May. We will be celebrating his leadership and looking for a new handbell choir director before next Fall.
- c. Additional report by Pr. Jonathan:
 - i. OWL Group - 8 high schoolers have been participating in this human sexuality course. Many thanks to Tamara and all that she contributes.
 - ii. St. John’s has been continuing to support a queer youth center in Northfield. CYAN is an LGBTQ+ community youth group for middle and high school students. CYAN stands for Community Youth Activities Night.
 - iii. Wednesday night Youth Group during Lent - good attendance and participation during Lenten services.

7. Board Reports: included in the materials for the Council meeting

a. **Adult Ministry and Education**

- i. **Action Item re: registration fee for the St. John’s softball team.** Adult Ministry & Education is funding \$200 from their budget, but they need another \$514 (\$200 for registration, and \$314 for equipment). Next year they would include these recurring expenses in their budget. Council suggests the additional expenses could come from the **Community & Social Ministry category within Release from Foundation (\$490)**. Adult Ministry & Education would cover the

remainder of the costs. Motion by Marilyn Calcutt for a Foundation Request of \$490 to be Released from Foundation, seconded by Mark Gleason. Motion passes unanimously.

b. Evangelism & Communications

i. Action Item re: reinstating the Acoustic Improvement Ad Hoc Committee to manage the St. John's Hall acoustic upgrade project

1. Update from Mark Gleason: The E&C Board has received a second bid, from **Twin Cities Acoustics** (based in Plymouth). Whereas bid #1 was for a ceiling "cloud" treatment only (\$46,500), Twin Cities Acoustics broke its bid into two parts, the first being a **wall treatment for \$29,000**. TC Acoustics would like to see how that phase works in terms of sound improvement. Then, if needed, they could move on to an additional **\$24,000 for ceiling treatment**. The Acoustic Improvement Ad Hoc Committee would review the bids and make a recommendation on how to proceed. Motion by Mark Gleason that the Council approves the reconvening of the Acoustic Improvement Ad Hoc Committee for St. John's hall acoustic improvement. Seconded by Jerry Ugland. Motion passes unanimously.
- ii. Leah informed ECB that there is damage to our biggest TV; ECB will monitor that and come up with a possible plan for replacement
- iii. **Live Captioning for hard-of-hearing members** - this is another long-term project where the ECB is working with pastors and Christy Hall-Holt for better and predictable service for hard of hearing members. ECB is working with a company called SpeechGear that will provide live captioning of spoken words (captured by microphone) onto any tablet or device. This service (based in Northfield) can also offer translations and captions in other languages. Christy and Mark will be meeting later this week to go over results and make a future plan (we are on a free trial). Faith & Health and ECB would collaborate to make a plan to educate members on these and other hearing options.

c. Stewardship

- i. **Action item re: Ministry Fair** to be held in late August. This would be a great opportunity to highlight our boards, WELCA, Circle ministry, etc. Stewardship is looking for approval from council to develop this type of ministry fair, with the understanding that Boards would need to help populate the event. Council expressed support for this idea.

d. Property & Grounds

- i. **Action item re: rebate program**. Xcel is offering a 20% rebate program if we switch to LED lighting (from fluorescent/candescent lighting). The rebate program ended March 31, 2022 but if we sign up in the next week we can still get the 20% rebate. If we replace all the lights at St. Johns that haven't been replaced, it would be a total cost **\$14,431** (the rebate saves \$4,268; the total cost without the rebate is \$18,699).
 1. Council discussed the option of not doing all of the replacement lighting at once because of the large cost, but instead prioritizing certain spaces, i.e. kitchen, offices, outside entryways. Rod

Christensen suggests that Council approves up to \$5,000 for replacement lighting work from our **Designated Funds / Church Council / 2021 Budget Surplus** (currently balance \$13,299). Motion by Jerry Ugland, seconded by Kathleen Shea.

2. Upon further discussion, which includes reviewing figures to include parking lot replacement lighting, Rod Christensen suggests a **friendly amendment that the Council approves up to \$8,000 for replacement lighting work from Designated Funds / Church Council / 2021 Budget Surplus**. Motion passes unanimously.

8. New Business

a. New Designated Fund opportunity

- i. Rod Christensen updated Council regarding a Designated Fund in the amount of **\$16,810**, listed under **Designated Funds / Church Council / Undefined**. This DF was originally intended to help members who might need short-term loans (microloans), but this original designation (while desirable) proved to be impractical. Donor agrees and suggests that we use these funds for other purposes (no particular strings attached). Rod Christensen and Pr. Pam suggest that Council should follow the spirit of the donation, which is supporting community needs via financial literacy, financial planning, and local housing opportunities. Donor is also happy to have Council use the designation for other needs, such as Capital Improvement projects.
 1. Rod Christensen and Pr. Pam suggest that $\frac{2}{3}$ of this fund be spent in some social services area to support the local community, and that $\frac{1}{3}$ could be used for any capital improvement project needs. Rod Christensen also asked that Jerry Ugland and the Benevolence & Social Concerns Board look into areas that might meet this need. Jerry agreed.
 2. Motion made by Kathleen Shea to change this Designated Fund: $\frac{2}{3}$ of the fund (approximately \$11,207) will go towards Benevolence & Social Concerns issues related to local housing and financial planning, and $\frac{1}{3}$ toward capital improvement (approximately \$5,603). Seconded by Kristy Harms. Motion passes unanimously.

b. May Board Night

- i. Council agreed to plan for an in-person board night in May (Tuesday, May 10, 2022). There will be a collective gathering at the beginning, and then members would split into boards.

c. Long-range site & program planning - process and opportunity

- i. Pr. Pam's summary: our facility has constant needs, but unfortunately our budgeting process doesn't always help us think long-term about how we use

our facility. There are several long-term projects and discussions that have come up or will be coming in the next few years, such as:

1. How we use and need to improve our parking lot
 2. Sustainable energy use (solar or other kinds of energy projects)
 3. Playground - Open Door nursery school can apply for a grant for the playground, but we (Children's Ministry) share that space with them. How do we think about our outdoor space in the long term?
 4. Tim Byers's position as we look into the future: is this more than what one person can manage?
 5. Kitchen and St. John's Hall - can we make better use of this space? It's used by our community - but costs fall to us as a congregation.
 6. Theater - doesn't get a lot of use, and not very accessible. How do we or should we reconsider this space?
- ii. All these questions don't fit into one year's budget or one P&G meeting. What is a 5-year vision for our space? Do we need to re-evaluate spaces that only have one use? Should we consider spaces as multi-use areas? How do we set up a process where the boards can think about these questions, as well as staff contributing to this discussion? How do we collect all that and then come together with a longer term recommendation on how we use our space? How are we the best stewards of our physical space? We need to have a clear inventory of what our space is and how we use it. An inventory could yield to priority setting. Who are we serving as a congregation both inside and outside of our walls? If we wanted to make our space more accessible, what does that look like?
 - iii. Council agrees that there is enthusiasm and a need for this type of work. Over the next month, Rod Christensen suggests that we get a little closer to what could be a proposal for moving forward.
- d. **Suggestion re: absence:** Jerry Ugland suggests, with Council's agreement, that if a board member cannot be present at Council, someone else from that Board could come and represent that Board's interests in their place.

Rod Christensen closes with a prayer.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38pm.

Other Notes: none.

Respectfully submitted by Trish Goodrich