

# Minutes Congregation Council

St. John's Lutheran Church, Northfield, MN  
November 27, 2018

Present: Rob Quanbeck, Ruthie Neuger, Pr. Pam Fickenscher, Pr. Jonathan Davis, Marilyn Calcutt, Jennifer Edwins, Martha Erickson, Mark Gleason, Eric Holleque, Nancy Ordahl Knoch, Alyssa Ness, Jane Rinehart, Dan Van Tassel, Kristy Harms

Not Present: Terry Dell

Guest: Bernie Renander

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Rob Quanbeck.

**1. Opening Prayer** - Offered by Mark Gleason.

## **2. Future dates**

1. **Boards** – December 11, 7:00pm. Treats provided by Adult Ministry Board at 6:45 pm. Reminder: Please call or e-mail your board members prior to the meeting as a reminder for them.
2. **Council** – **December 18, 2018\***, 7:00pm; Alyssa Ness, prayer  
One week early, due to Christmas
3. **Annual Board Reports** – Friday December 15, 2016
4. **St. John's Annual Meeting** – Sunday January 20, 2019

## **3. Pastors' Reports**

**Worship.** Worship in November was strong; it's that "sweet spot" between summer activity and winter weather or snowbird flight. 2018 November attendance was higher than the 2017 experience, and more in line with what might be expected.

Average over 4 years:

2014: 383      2015: 370      2016: 379      2017: 329      2018: 368

Also of note: we are monitoring attendance patterns for Christmas Eve. We are seeing more robust attendance at the 5:00 pm service, and a drop-off in the 11 pm service. Last year may have been an outlier, with Christmas Eve falling on a Sunday, but we will continue to monitor this year to see whether it offers clues in what comes next.

**CYF ministry.** The Youth Transition Team continues to meet regularly, and is working on reframing the job description for our Director of Youth and Family Ministry. After reviewing around 50 parent and youth surveys, we have centered on the words "belonging" and "integration" for our vision for youth and family ministry at St. Johns. We sense that parents and youth are hoping to find a church community where they belong and are integrated into the life of the church. We hope to have a draft of the job description for the council to review at the December Council meeting.

**Nominating.** A brief for incoming Council and board members was included in agenda materials, including proposed dates for next year's meetings. Board chairs are encouraged to reach out to those who have said "yes" as soon as possible. Although their duties won't begin until after the

annual meeting, it is helpful to get questions answered soon. **Please note the date of our Council retreat is Saturday February 2.**

**Staff.** Gratitude was expressed for staff flexibility over recent weeks through the busy fall. There are still long-term questions in staffing to address areas of CYF ministry, shared ministry and business management, but the relative stability of staff this year has been a gift.

One of the goals identified at the spring retreat was to be able to do some team learning together. The staff is working through Brene Brown's *Dare to Lead*. It has been a helpful tool to discuss communication patterns and the culture that the staff would like to build at St. John's.

**Beyond St. John's.** The SE Minnesota Synod's Fall Theological Conference met November 4-6 in Lacrosse, WI. This year's theme was building multicultural competency and confronting racism. Each leader in the synod has taken the Intercultural Development Inventory, which assesses competency in working across cultural boundaries. As a synod, we have scored in the category of "minimizing" cultural differences. There was good, and perhaps, unprecedented, conversation about what kind of leaders we want to be in changing cultural landscape

### **Council Action Items and Updates**

- a. Grace Overflowing update. Bernie Renander provided an update on the status of fundraising. He noted that it is possible that 5% of the pledged funds may not be collectable, for a variety of reasons. Painting the Sanctuary is planned for 2019; original bids for this budgeted project were for a 12 week process. Shorter timeframes for this project will cost more, but may be worth the cost. Replacing the floor in Fellowship Hall is still projected for completion in summer 2019, but is dependent on what conditions are under the existing floor. Jane asked if the projects will be completed by October 2019; Pr. Pam confirmed that completion by October 2019 is still the goal. Pr. Jonathan asked if refinishing the pews is still on the list for completion; Pr. Pam advised that none of the processes identified has had an acceptable result.

Bernie noted that three more projects have been identified that are not included in the Capital campaign funds: 1) Assessment from the City of Northfield for completion of street project, estimated at \$15,000.00; 2) New computers for staff; 3) Membrane leak in roof.

- b. Management of gifts & bequests. Bernie and Pr. Pam. St. John's have been notified that we will receive a substantial gift from the estate of a former member; there is not designation from the estate for the gift. The Council made a recommendation for disbursement of undesignated gifts that divided such funds three ways. During discussion, Jane Rinehart asked that the Council consider Benevolence needs when making a determination on how best to apply the funds. Bernie noted that he isn't certain how the street assessment and the roof membrane repair will be funded. Bernie recommended setting up an enhanced reserve account to address capital maintenance and repairs. Rob noted that funding Foundation investments is important, too.

Rob asked Bernie when a decision should be made regarding the disposition of the funds; Bernie recommended making a decision now. The funds will be released by the estate at some point in the not-distant future. Jenny Nystrom asked if there is a hard-and-fast rule for distribution of undesignated funds, and there is not a rule.

Kristy made the following motion, based on Bernie's recommendation: \$40,000 of the gift will be designated to a deferred maintenance fund, resulting in a total of \$50,000 for deferred capital maintenance. The remaining \$8,000 of the gift will be directed to the St. John's Foundation.

Dan Van Tassel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by the Council.

- c. Hearing Loop Technology – Mark Gleason. An article describing the experience with hearing loop technology from First United Methodist Church of Red Wing, and estimated bids from a vendor were included in meeting agenda materials for the Council. A member of the congregation approached the pastors to introduce the concept of hearing loop technology. Benefactors have offered to provide grants to St. John’s to help pay for the cost of the technology. Women of St. John’s have agreed to contribute funds that were originally designated for another hearing device program for use in installation of this technology. Hearing loop technology works with existing hearing aids to filter out ambient noise and enhance sound. The technology could be set up in pastoral offices, the Fireside room and the sanctuary. Estimated costs for this technology:

Fellowship Hall - \$12,000

St. John’s Hall - \$12,000

Sanctuary - \$14,000

The cost for Fireside room is about the same as the cost for St. John’s Hall.

Installation in the ceiling of Fellowship Hall, instead of the floor, might permit use of the technology in the Sanctuary. Waiting to install the technology at the same time as the flooring project in Fellowship Hall will avoid added expense. Installation does not have to occur simultaneously in all of the spaces.

Mark explained that:

- T-coil and Bluetooth technologies use different frequencies.
- Sound quality is much better in the hearing loop technology than the existing hearing assistance devices.
- Evangelism and Communications is seeking Council direction for next steps.

Jenny Nystrom asked if there would be ongoing costs associated with this technology.

Nancy Ordahl Kmoch asked if this would eliminate the need for ASL resources. Mark advised that a closed captioning program that Daniel Edwins is working on may address ASL resources.

Ruthie thanked Mark and the ECC board for the research on this issue.

The Council charged Evangelism & Communications board to obtain a proposal for installation of hearing loop technology in Fellowship Hall ceiling/Sanctuary.

- d. Health Fair debrief – Jennifer Edwins. Feed back for the event has been very positive from groups that were represented at the event, and from members that attended. Northfield Hospital would like to return for future events and host a table with information about Medicare physicals. Faith and Health board sees value in doing this event again. The Health Fair coincided with MEA weekend, resulting in lower than anticipated attendance.
- e. Northfield Curbside Compost opportunity. Northfield Curbside Compost Collaborative has approached St. John’s with the opportunity to host a compost site for the west side of Northfield. A draft contract has been submitted for review and consideration. Jane Rinehart made the motion to move ahead with a contract for curbside composting. Jenny Nystrom seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
- f. Stewardship update - Dan Van Tassel. A 3% increase in pledged funds is anticipated for 2019. A total of \$1,000,000 is expected for next year. More information will be available at the December meeting.
- g. 2019 Council meeting date corrections:
- January 8, 2019
  - February 26, 2019
  - November 26, 2019

## 5. Consent Agenda Items for Council

- a. Treasurer’s Report – October 2018

b. October 23, 2018 Council Minutes

Ruthie Neuger made the motion to accept the Treasurer's Report for October 2018 and the October 23, 2018 Council Minutes as submitted to the Council. Jennifer Edwins seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**6. A closing prayer was offered by Rob Quanbeck, and he led us in the Lord's Prayer.**

**7. Meeting concluded.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Harms