

Minutes
Congregational Council
St. John's Lutheran Church
August 25th, 2026

Members: Pastor Pam Fickenscher, Pastor Jonathan Davis, President Paul Beck, President Elect Pam Groves-Gaggioli, Treasurer Judd Lohmann, Secretary Steve Reece; Council Members Cheryl Buck, Beth Cox, Jill Enestvedt, Olaf Hall-Holt, Brian Evenson, Dan Hanson, Andrea Hoff, Susan Lohmann, and Ruthie Neuger.

Present: Pastor Jonathan Davis, President Paul Beck, Treasurer Judd Lohmann, Secretary Steve Reece; Council Members Beth Cox, Jill Enestvedt, Olaf Hall-Holt, Brian Evenson, Dan Hanson, Susan Lohmann, Brenda Nelson (representing Worship & Arts), and Vern Koester (representing Property & Grounds).

Absent: Pastor Pam Fickenscher (on sabbatical), President Elect Pam Groves-Gaggioli; Council Members Cheryl Buck, Andrea Hoff, and Ruthie Neuger.

President Paul Beck called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

1. Devotions based on Walter Brueggemann's *The Prophetic Imagination*

Pastor Jonathan Davis led a discussion of pages 81-88 on the prophetic ministry of Jesus.

2. Approval of July Minutes

Dan Hanson made a motion, seconded by Judd Lohmann, for approval of the minutes of the July Council Meeting. Motion carried.

3. Financial Report

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

4. Action Items

Steve Reece made a motion, seconded by Jill Enestvedt, to approve a \$500 grant proposal submitted by Susan Lohmann to support the End of Life Choices Collective. Motion carried.

Judd Lohmann made a motion, seconded by Brian Evenson, to appoint Leah Garlie as the primary administrator of St. John's QuickBooks account. Motion carried.

Judd Lohmann made a motion, seconded by Dan Hanson, to approve an adjustment requested by Pastor Fick to her income and benefits package that would shift some of her income into a contribution to her retirement account. This would require St. John's to enroll her in Portico and would also entail partially matching her retirement contribution. Motion carried.

5. Discussion Items

The Stewardship Board has chosen Hymn #315 "How good, Lord, to be here!" as its theme for the Fall and would like to use this hymn in worship. Is there any objection to using this Epiphany hymn at this time of the year? Should the Stewardship Board coordinate with the Worship and Arts Board or with Nathan Proctor directly? Council expressed no objection to introducing this hymn outside of the Epiphany season and recommended that the Worship and Arts Board coordinate with Nathan Proctor on the matter.

The two locust trees in the island outside door #1 of the church are sickly and are presenting an obstruction to the paving project of the parking lot. The Property and Grounds Board recommends that the trees be removed and replaced. Council recommended that this be communicated to the congregation through e-voice, the newsletter, the bulletin, and in an announcement during the worship service.

The Worship and Arts Board has proposed requesting \$3,000 from the Foundation to pay music interns for the Fall Semester. A second request would be submitted for the Spring Semester. Interns were previously funded by gifts set up for that purpose. Is this a proper use for Foundation funds? Are there other options? Is there enough in the general designated music fund to cover these expenses for now? Council referred the matter to the president and treasurer to examine the budget, resolve the issue, and communicate with Nathan Proctor.

6. Pastors' Report

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

7. Board Updates

8. Old Business

President Paul Beck provided an update on Isaiah efforts to monitor polling places.

9. New Business

Pastor Jonathan Davis alerted Council to a probable substantial increases in staff health insurance premiums next year. How will these increases be funded? Council suggested that the Personnel Committee make a recommendation to Council.

Council members expressed a desire to meet with the Foundation Board to discuss the priorities and procedures of the Foundation. A meeting sometime in September was suggested.

Council members expressed a desire for St. John's to hold a vigil on election day in November. General consent was offered, but also the advice that it not be held at a polling site (i.e., St. John's) during the election process (8 am to 8 pm).

10. Future Dates

Board Meetings on September 8th, 7 pm

Council Meeting on September 22nd, 7 pm

President Paul Beck adjourned the meeting at 8:30 pm.

Minutes submitted by Secretary Steve Reece

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

Total Operating Income is \$2k below budget for the month of July, and (\$102k) below budget YTD through July.

- Offering:
 - o July offering was \$3k above budget.
 - o July YTD offering is (\$52k) below budget.
 - o 2026 July YTD offering is about \$18k above 2025 YTD offering through July.
- Other Income
 - o July YTD combined "Other Income" and "Other Gifts" is \$4k above budget.
 - o July YTD Designated and Foundation Funds are (\$54k) below budget.

Total Operating Expense is \$24k above budget for July, and (\$44k) below budget YTD through July.

- Personnel is \$40k above budget for July and \$5k above budget YTD. Because of the timing of how salaries are paid, there is one month where salaries are doubled up. This "double up" occurred in July. I expect Personnel to be close to target by year end.

- Property and Grounds is (\$6k) below budget for the month of June.
 - o YTD Property and Grounds is (\$11k) below Budget
 - o YTD Benevolence is (\$4k) below budget and Youth is about (\$9k) below budget
 - o No Boards are above budget YTD

Net Income/(loss)

- Net Income for July is (\$26k) below budget, and (\$58k) below budget YTD.

I don't have any particular concerns at this time.

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

Official acts:

Funeral for Kathy Thompson, August 17

Funeral for David Halsor, August 18

Staff:

Nick Gilbert and Pastor Katie Fick have fully joined the team and been installed in worship. Both are doing a great job jumping in and getting connected to the congregation.

Portico provided their update for benefits in 2027. While for a few years Portico has been able to keep their annual increases lower than other insurance providers, that has changed this year. The increase to for 2027 will be 15%. In Portico's word:

- *Due to the significant rise in medical costs, organizations will see a baseline **15% increase for ELCA-Primary health benefits**. Encourage your employer to use our Benefit Cost Estimator tool to see their projected contribution costs.*
- *Contribution rates will **decrease from 0.5% to 0% of defined compensation for employer-provided disability and survivor benefits** thanks to the strong funded status of these trusts.*
- ***Some 2027 member out-of-pocket costs have increased**, for example, brand-name drugs and out-of-network care, while others remain unchanged.*

Across the country, health plans, employers, and families continue to face significant affordability challenges.

The council, personnel, and the budget committee will need to be in conversation about how to navigate these rising costs – especially as we enter into Stewardship season.

CYE:

St. John's partnered with Bethel for VBS in August. They brought a group from Good Earth Village to help lead a week-long VBS. St. John's hosted a VBS for younger kids that same week. Everything went really well!

St. John's, Bethel, First UCC, and St. Peter's continue to partner together for some summer events. Last week, St. John's hosted 30+ youth for a Romans and Christians night.

Around the church:

Parking lot bids have come in and the Property and Grounds board has narrowed it down to two bids. There is still hope that this project might be completed before the snow flies!