

**Minutes  
Congregational Council  
St. John's Lutheran Church  
February 24, 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, Chris Engstrom, Brian Evenson, Dan Hanson, Andrea Hoff, Susan Lohmann, and Ruthie Neuger.

**Present:** Pastor Pam Fickenscher, Pastor Jonathan Davis, President Paul Beck, President Elect Pam Groves-Gaggioli, Treasurer Judd Lohmann; Council Members Cheryl Buck, Beth Cox, Jill Enestvedt, Chris Engstrom, Brian Evenson, Dan Hanson, Andrea Hoff, Susan Lohmann and Jeff McLaughlin St. John's Foundation President.

**Absent:** Secretary Steve Reece, Council Member Ruthie Neuger

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

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

Pastor Fickenscher led a discussion on pages 1-9.

**2. Approval of the January and February Minutes**

Andrea Hoff made a motion, seconded by Cheryl Buck, for approval of the minutes of the January Council Budget Meeting. Motion carried.

Andrea Hoff made a motion, seconded by Brian Evenson, for approval of the minutes of the February Council Retreat Meeting. Motion carried.

**3. Financial Report**

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

**4. Action Items**

None

**5. Discussion Items**

Foundation Update (Jeff McLaughlin)

The foundation is now thirty years old and has donated almost as much money as it has taken in over this period. Four percent of the foundation funds are donated each year. For 2025 this amount was \$50,000. It is estimated to be \$65,000 in 2026 and \$70,000 in 2027. The Foundation's preference is to give one third within St. John's, one third within Northfield, and one third globally. A portion of the total for 2026 has already been allotted and approximately \$24,000 remains. The grant process for applying for Foundation funds which began in 2025 will continue in 2026 with a small change to better coordinate the approval process. The Foundation will see and approve applications first, followed by the Council. In the case of the Foundation **not** approving a grant, the Council and Foundation will discuss options together.

Worship and Arts Board had requested discussion regarding balcony space and an addition to bylaws allowing for decommissioning of musical instruments after their useful life. No board member was present so the discussion will be scheduled for next month's meeting.

## **6. Pastors' Report**

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

- a. Pastor Fickenscher
- b. Pastor Davis

## **7. Old Business**

Pastor Fickenscher confirmed that a letter of intent has been signed with Fredrickson & Byron, PA. for legal representation. No financial retainer has been requested and none will be sent unless required.

## **8. New Business**

A motion was made by Judd Lohmann and seconded by Pam Groves-Gaggioli to approve a housing allowance for our pastors for IRS purposes. For Pam Fickenscher the amount is \$50,000. For Jonathan Davis the amount is \$43,000.

## **9. Future Dates**

Board Night: Tuesday, March 10th, 7 pm (Youth Board reports they will meet on March 11 after confirmation).

Council Meeting: Tuesday, March 24th, 7 pm.

Motion by Cheryl Buck, second by Andrea Hoff to adjourn the meeting.

President Paul Beck adjourned the meeting at 7:56 pm.

Minutes submitted by Jill Enestvedt

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### **Addendum #1: St. John's Treasurer's Financial Report for January 2026:**

Total Operating Income is (\$28k) below budget for the month of January.

- Offering:

- o January offering was (\$19k) below budget.
- o 2026 January offering was about \$15k above 2025 offering through January.

- Other Income:

- o January combined "Other Income" and "other Gifts" right on budget.
- o No Designated and Foundation Funds were released in January, so these items are (\$9k) below budget.

Total Operating Expense is (\$27k) below budget for January.

- Personnel was (\$9k) below budget. 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 (\$18k) below budget.
- We are still waiting for the savings from the Solar Panels to show up on our utility bills.

Net Income/(loss)

- The Net Income for January was (\$1K) below budget.

**Addendum #2:** February 2026 Pastors' Report:

### Official Acts:

Baptism for Claire Kuehn, January 25

Funeral for Don Starkweather, February 23

### Worship:

It was delightful to have the St. Olaf Choir with us in worship on January 18. There were a lot of comments about how well the students interacted with the congregation during fellowship hour. Thanks to Angie Gehring and her crew for providing a hot breakfast for the singers that morning.

Ash Wednesday's attendance was robust despite winter weather. There was a very strong attendance for the evening meal, which we have not always had on this day. A big thank you to board volunteers helping to serve these Lenten soup suppers!

### Stephen Ministry

A new class of Stephen Ministers has completed their training. In the near future, we will be commissioning 8 new Stephen Ministers! Many thanks to the leadership team for making a training year possible.

### Children, Youth, and Family

Confirmation completed another year of J-Term, in partnership with St. Peter's and Bethel. Pastor Jonathan lead a 4-week series with High School Youth on "Christian Influencers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century."

The Youth Visioning Team will be finalizing a job description for our Director of Ministry with Youth and Families, with the hopes of posting the job opening on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Kristin Partlo will be leaving at the end of July to start her internship in August.

### Facilities

We continue to be in conversation with Xcel about getting our billing fixed. They have renewed the hold on our billing until June of this year.

### Community engagement

The surge of ICE presence in Minnesota in January dominated our hearts and our consciousness over the past six weeks. At this writing we are still seeing both fear in our immigrant community and ongoing economic impacts.

The positive response to the news of my participation in civil disobedience on January 23 was overwhelming. There have been only a couple voices that have expressed concern or disagreement, and we continue to invite further conversation with those folks.

We've also seen a surge in volunteering and gifts to the Community Action Center – here in Northfield and also gifts from beyond Minnesota. The needs for food and rent assistance will continue to be high, so you can expect that to be a focus during Minnesota FoodShare month.

In the month ahead we are looking forward to a mass Palm Sunday procession and witness in Saint Paul on the afternoon of March 29. This event will highlight the heart of our Christian faith – loving our neighbor, putting people before profit and power.

Future opportunities:

We still have a spot open for the Synod Assembly on Friday May 1. If you are interested in attending as a voting member, please let us know within the next month.