

**Minutes
Congregational Council
St. John's Lutheran Church
June 23rd, 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, President Elect Pam Groves-Gaggioli, Treasurer Judd Lohmann, Secretary Steve Reece; Council Members Cheryl Buck, Jill Enestvedt, Brian Evenson, Dan Hanson, Andrea Hoff, Susan Lohmann, and Ruthie Neuger.

Absent: Pastor Jonathan Davis, President Paul Beck; Council Members Beth Cox and Chris Engstrom.

President Elect Pam Groves-Gaggioli called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

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

Pastor Fickenscher led a discussion of pages 59-67 on the prophetic promise of newness as a counterpoint to the royal consciousness.

2. Approval of May Minutes

Ruthie Neuger made a motion, seconded by Jill Enestvedt, for approval of the minutes of the May Council Budget Meeting. Motion carried.

3. Financial Report

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

4. Action Items

Pastor Davis' 2027 Sabbatical must be approved by a vote of Council. See addendum #3 (below) for his application and addendum #4 (below) for the recommendation of the Personnel Committee (first text in bold). Susan Lohmann made a motion, seconded by Andrea Hoff, for approval of the Sabbatical application. Motion carried.

The Youth & Family Board had requested that Council decide how to fund refreshments and a gift for Kristin Partlo's celebration on July 12th. Cheryl Buck made a motion, seconded by Judd Lohmann, to draw the funds for a \$200 gift from "Undesignated Memorials." Motion carried. Arrangements for refreshments will be made by the Stewardship Board.

Council agreed to consider a motion to approve contingently a Foundation grant request for \$5,000 from Julie Brehmer to update the furnishings of the St. John's nursery this summer. The approval is contingent on the approval of the Foundation Committee. Brian Evenson made the motion, seconded by Ruthie Neuger. Motion carried. [The Foundation Committee later approved this grant request.]

5. Discussion Items

Pastor Fickenschier will be adding a dependent to her health insurance on August 1st, so the church budget for the second half of the year will need to be adjusted accordingly. See addendum #4 (below) for the recommendation of the Personnel Committee (second text in bold). Council enthusiastically concurred with the decision of the Personnel Committee on the matter.

The Foundation has recently received additional funds that will become available in the next calendar year. Council members were reminded to be on the lookout for opportunities to use these funds and to encourage church members to apply for Foundation grants. Various suggestions were offered to make these grant opportunities, and their outcomes, more visible to the congregation.

6. Pastors' Report

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

7. Board Updates

8. Old Business

9. New Business

10. Future Dates

Board Meetings on July 14th, 7 pm

Council Meeting on July 28th, 7 pm

President Elect Pam Groves-Gaggioli adjourned the meeting at 8:15 pm.

Minutes submitted by Secretary Steve Reece

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

Total Operating Income is \$30k above budget for the month of May, and (\$79k) below budget YTD through May.

- Offering:
 - o May offering was \$38k above budget.
 - o May YTD offering is (\$44k) below budget.
 - o 2026 May YTD offering is about \$29k above 2025 YTD offering through May.
Note: the month of May 2026 offering was about \$62k higher than May 2025.
- Other Income
 - o May YTD combined "Other Income" and "Other Gifts" is \$4k above budget.
 - o May YTD Designated and Foundation Funds are (\$40k) below budget.

Total Operating Expense is (\$8k) below budget for May, and (\$73k) below budget YTD through May.

- Personnel is (\$5k) below budget for May and (\$28k) below budget YTD. 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 (\$3k) below budget for May and (\$44k) below budget YTD.
 - o YTD Property and Grounds is (\$19k) below Budget
 - o YTD Benevolence is (\$5k) below budget and Youth is about (\$7k) below budget
 - o No Boards are above budget YTD

Net Income/(loss)

- Net Income for May is \$38k above budget, and (\$7k) below budget YTD.

YTD offering was (\$81k) below budget through April. A communication was shared with the congregation, and they responded in a big way. While YTD offering is still below budget for the year, giving so far this year is significantly ahead of 2025 through May.

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

Official acts:

Burial of Kathy Vang, May 28 (deceased in 2025)
 Funeral for Robert Flaten, June 5 (deceased in 2025)
 Funeral for Carol V. Johnson, June 20
 Wedding for Vanessa Loe, June 20

Staff:

We are entering the time of 'comings and goings,' as staff take summer vacations, camps and mission trips get under way, and we say good-bye to one staff member and welcome another.

Kristin is taking a long-awaited trip with family and will return to finish out her work with us. She will preach on July 12 and be formally sent off to internship. Nick Gilbert will start work with us on July 20 and overlap with Kristin for one week. The Youth board and the Stewardship board are collaborating on the farewell reception for Kristin on July 12.

Arturo Rosas suffered a back injury at his other employment at NUMC on June 9. He will be out until he gets a doctor's clearance to resume his cleaning duties.

CYF:

Pastor Jonathan is away with our middle and high school youth on their mission trip to Milwaukee this week. This particular trip is a destination and service organization St. John's has worked with before, so we are confident the group will have a great experience.

Sabbaticals

My sabbatical begins on July 24. I'm working closely with Jonathan to assure that matters like the fall stewardship appeal and the nominating committee's work can move forward in my absence. We are also getting an early start on staff reviews and personnel budgeting.

Jonathan has submitted his proposal for a sabbatical in summer of 2027 and Personnel committee has recommended it. See the attached.

Around the church:

The new alarm system is installed and we are in the process of learning the new ins and outs of it. All staff have been equipped with key fobs and an app that allows for remote adjustments. If you find yourself in need of coming into the building when it is locked, please contact a staff member. There are now motion sensors in the hallways and Commons that will go off if the building is alarmed.

St. John's has a new seminarian! In addition to Julie Zdenek, Kristin Partlo, Christy Hall-Holt and Chelsey Hendriksen -- all studying at Luther Seminary -- Debra Ehret Miller has entered the process for candidacy in Word and Service and will begin classes at Wartburg Seminary in the fall.

St. John's had a great showing at Pride in the Park on Saturday June 6. There was a very full "church row" of affirming congregations speaking our word of grace and welcome to the community; in addition, Pride invited "resistance singers" to give a visible and audible counter to the perennial fundamentalist street preaching that has been increasingly hostile in recent years. Many people expressed gratitude that the message of love from our faith community was loud and clear.

Organizing is beginning for this fall's elections and efforts to protect every voter's rights. Isaiah is launching a multi-state initiative called Faith in Us, building a national network of clergy who will be ready to speak out for civil rights and voter protection in the fall. The League of Women Voters is also gathering leaders locally to discuss how our community organizations can work together to provide accurate information and protect polling places.