

[Unapproved]
Minutes
Congregational Council
St. John's Lutheran Church
June 24th, 2025

Members: Pastor Pam Fickenscher, Pastor Jonathan Davis, President Michelle Kramer-Prevost, President Elect Paul Beck, Treasurer Judd Lohmann, Secretary Steve Reece; Council Members Cheryl Buck, Jill Enestvedt, Dan Hanson, Andrea Hoff, Eric Johnsrud, Susan Lohmann, and Maggie Odell.

Present: Pastor Pam Fickenscher, President Michelle Kramer-Prevost, President Elect Paul Beck, Treasurer Judd Lohmann, Secretary Steve Reece; Council Members Cheryl Buck, Jill Enestvedt, Andrea Hoff, Eric Johnsrud, Susan Lohmann, and Maggie Odell; Brian Evenson (representing Children's Ministry and Education Board), Amy McBroom (representing Youth Ministry and Education Board).

Absent: Pastor Jonathan Davis, Dan Hanson.

President Michelle Kramer-Prevost called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

1. Devotions

Pastor Pam Fickenscher led the group in a discussion of Chapters 5-6 of Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Strength to Love*, having to do with loving one's enemies.

2. Foundation Update: Jeff McLaughlin was not able to attend the meeting. At a future meeting he will fill the Council in on how the application process is going for Foundation grants (three grants have been funded so far). Ample funds remain for further grant applications.

3. Approval of May Minutes

Eric Johnsrud made a motion, seconded by Cheryl Buck, for approval of the May Council Minutes. Motion carried.

4. Financial Report

Treasurer Judd Lohman updated the Council on the April finances (see addendum #1).

5. Discussion Item

a. Stewardship Board sought the Council's advice on whether or not to continue hosting the Ministry Fair, which has taken place on the Sunday after the first day of Sunday school (Sept 21st this year). Jill Enestvedt stated that the Stewardship Board was neutral on the subject. There was general enthusiasm for the Fair, but it was decided to hold it every other year, with an attempt to replicate some of the material in the weekly "E-Voice" on off years.

6. Action Items

a. A Foundation Fund application for \$300 for a Courageous Conversations event to host a Navajo storyteller and historian was considered. Andrea Hoff made a motion, seconded by Maggie Odell, to approve the request, with the money drawn from the Nelson Fund. Motion carried.

b. Pastor Pam Fickenschier informed Council about some expected transitions in the youth ministry programs into 2026. See Addendum #2 (below) for the pastoral staff's proposal to constitute a task force. Andrea Hoff made a motion, seconded by Brian Evenson, to constitute the task force. Motion carried.

c. Because of some scheduling conflicts, Brenda Nelson and Ron Hebensperger have agreed to serve as co-chairs in place of the current chair Eric Johnsrud through the remainder of Eric's term, which is set to expire in January, 2026. Eric will resign on August 1st, 2025. President Elect Paul Beck made a motion, seconded by Susan Lohmann, to have Brenda Nelson and Ron Hebensperger serve as co-chairs for the remainder of the term.

7. Pastors' Report

See Addendum #3 (below) for Pastors' Report

a. Pastor Fickenschier

b. Pastor Davis

5. Old Business

6. New Business

7. Future Dates

Board Night: Tuesday, July 8th, 7 pm

Council Meeting: Tuesday, July 22nd, 7 pm

Also:

Summer Social: July 13th, 3-5 pm at Spring Creek Park

Church Softball Game Event: July 27th at 8:10 pm at Babcock Park

Night to Unite Picnic: August 5th, 5-7 pm in St. John's parking lot

President Michelle Kramer-Prevost adjourned the meeting at 8:10 pm.

Minutes submitted by Secretary Steve Reece

Addendum #1: May 2025 Treasurers Financial Report:

Total Operating Income is (\$26k) below budget for the month of May and (\$67k) below budget YTD.

- Offering:

o May offering was (\$20k) below budget.

o YTD offering is (\$56k) below budget.

o 2025 YTD offering actuals through May are about (\$9k) below 2024 offering through May.

- Other Income

o YTD combined “Other Income” and “other Gifts” are \$16k higher than budget.

o Very few Designated and Foundation Funds have been released so for this year, these items are (\$28k) below budget.

Total Operating Expense is (\$9k) below budget for the month of May, and (\$52k) below budget YTD.

- Personnel is (\$32k) below budget YTD through May. There has been a lag in the reporting for 2025 salary increases. This is expected to be brought up to date, retroactively, in May.

- All other Board expense categories are close to budget through the five months into the year.

Net Income/(loss)

- The Net Income YTD through May is (\$15K) below budget.

There are no particular areas of concern through April.

Addendum #2: YOUTH STAFFING TASK FORCE CHARGE

The need:

St. John’s will be in transition for our youth position by the summer of 2026. Kristin Partlo will serve in the position through the next school year, but will be required to serve her pastoral internship in another congregation beginning August/ September of 2026. This next year gives us a beneficial window to assess our needs for staffing in youth ministry.

Background:

Prior to Emmanuel Kaghondi's hire in 2019, St. John's had an interim period in which the Youth board managed regular youth events, aided by a couple of part-time student staff and administrative hours from Angie Gehring. Parallel to that ongoing work, a separate task force assessed our youth needs and developed the current job description of Director for Ministry with Youth and Families. Kristin has served with that same job description, with the adjustment to 30 hours/ week. (Emmanuel was 40 hours).

Timeline:

The task force would form in the fall of 2025, with the goal of recommending a job description(s) and goals for youth ministry no later than March 2026.

Tasks:

- Assess St. John's needs for youth ministry through conversation and surveys with families with children in grades 3-9.
- Identify peer congregations and learn from their experience in staffing youth ministry.
- Engage with Northfield partner congregations (those we have shared mission trips, service projects and J-term events) around the future of these partnerships.
- Recommend budgeting parameters for 2026 staffing
- Work with the Personnel committee to edit the job description and identify any policy matters to be decided.

Addendum #3: June, 2025 Pastors' Report

Official Acts:

Baptism for Addison Violet Monson, May 25

Baptisms for Olive and Lee Tennyson, June 7

Baptism for Kai Islehart, June 8

Baptisms for Madeline and Andrew Ostertag, June 22

Memorial service for Billi Faillettaz, June 24

Worship life

The shift to one service has gone smoothly, and we hear positive feedback about the 'feel' of a full church. Larger attendance means it takes a little longer to commune everyone, so services are lasting slightly longer than usual.

Staff

Kristin Partlo has decided to take a year off between her CPE experience – set to end in August – and her pastoral internship. For St. John's that means we get one more year of her work in youth staffing. This is a gift of time to assess and plan for the future. A proposal for a task force is attached to this report.

CYF

Vacation Bible School was a wonderful week of good energy and fun with our partners from Bethel, St. Peter's and Emmaus churches.

This week we are sharing in a “Northfield week” at Good Earth Village by coordinating our visit there with the other ELCA churches in our town. Nine grade schoolers are attending two-night and five-night camps.

Facilities

We continue to await Xcel’s correction of our billing to account for our solar panel production. (Sound familiar?)

HVAC assessment continues as we shut down one compressor at the recommendation of a contractor. Our complex system continues to be a puzzle. Some days it is too cold (for people), others too humid (for the organ), and lately the sensors in the room don’t match the settings on the controls. Now that we have had some hot days, we will assess again how it’s working.

Other pending projects for Sustaining Grace include the parking lot, a new oven, and tuckpointing.

Social Concerns

St. John’s had a joyful participation in Pride, and we are grateful for the cross section of folks who spent part of their Saturday witnessing to our welcome to the community. There was heightened concern about security this year, and a fence around the park and controlled entry was felt to be necessary by the organizers. Some of our members were yelled at by the protestors as they walked by. Unfortunately, the windows of Old Paths (a.k.a. the picketing church) were vandalized on that day. Clergy from the affirming churches have spoken out together that we reject destructive and violent responses to the protestors. As people of faith we believe it is important to have a positive affirming voice for GLBTQ folks, and to acknowledge the harm that religious communities have done to them.

St. John’s pastors and members are also being invited into public witness through the community organizing efforts of Isaiah. This year the focus is on preserving our social safety nets and defending due process for every human in our community. In the longer-term, they are building an agenda for the thriving of small towns in Minnesota. As the legislative reality continues to evolve over the summer, you will hear about opportunities to engage in prayer, conversation and advocacy.