

[Unapproved] Minutes
Congregational Council
St. John's Lutheran Church
May 27th, 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, Treasurer Judd Lohmann, Secretary Steve Reece; Council Members Cheryl Buck, Jill Enestvedt, Dan Hanson, Andrea Hoff, Eric Johnsrud, Susan Lohmann, and Maggie Odell; Beth Cox (representing Children's Ministry and Education Board), Jim Brownlee (representing Youth Ministry and Education Board).

Absent: Pastor Jonathan Davis, President Elect Paul Beck,

President Michelle Kramer-Prevost called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

1. Devotions

Pastor Pam Fickenscher led the group in a discussion of Chapters 3-4 of Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Strength to Love*, having to do with the question of who is our neighbor, being based on Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan.

2. Approval of March Minutes

Eric Johnsrud made a motion, seconded by Jill Enestvedt, for approval of the April Council Minutes. Motion carried.

3. Financial Report

Treasurer Judd Lohman updated the Council on the April finances (see addendum #2).

4. Discussion Items

a. Children's Education & Ministry Board had requested that Council discuss how to include children with neurodiversity at St. John's. Julie Brehmer has provided the board articles regarding what parents who have children with neurodiversity are looking for in a church. Beth Cox filled the Council in on the increased need for attention to this matter. Council members expressed support and suggested funding sources for any possible expenses.

b. Members of Council have perceived a need for more opportunities for summer fellowship. The Evangelism Board is planning an outing to support the St. John's softball team. The Adult Ministry Board is planning a potluck in a local park on July 13th.

c. Pastor Pam Fickenscher advised the Council that issues surrounding immigration are on the radar of the church's leadership and are being discussed community-wide as well. Several church members have been asking about this.

5. Action Items

a. Andrea Hoff, on behalf of the Benevolence and Social Concerns Board, presented a proposal for a grant from the St. John's Foundation of \$2,500 to fund the purchase of 275-300 t-shirts with the St. John's logo on them for St. John's staff, volunteers, and youth. The goal is to create congregational connection through a shared visual identity of the St. John's logo on the t-shirts. It will also drive engagement in the community through the use of our visual identity when youth and adults are participating in events and/or volunteering in the community. Eric Johnsrud made a motion, seconded by Maggie Odell, for approval of the grant proposal. Motion carried.

b. President Michelle Kramer-Prevost moved that St. John's sponsor the annual Northfield Pride event at the "Unicorn" level (\$500), with funds taken from undesignated memorials, seconded by Andrea Hoff. Motion carried.

6. Pastors' Reports

Updates from Pastors Fickenscher and Davis (see addendum #1).

5. Old Business

6. New Business

a. Council discussed how things have changed at St. John's since the "end" of the pandemic. Many congregants have come back to live worship, though not yet at the levels of the pre-pandemic. Some, especially the elderly and families with small children, have continued to participate virtually. Some additional effort is being made to increase programs on Wednesday, possibly with the nursery available.

b. Synod Assembly will be held this coming weekend in Mankato. The pastors, some Council members, and some other congregants will be attending.

7. Future Dates

Board Night: Tuesday, June 10th, 7 pm

Council Meeting: Tuesday, June 24th, 7 pm

Meeting was adjourned at 8:28 pm

Minutes submitted by Secretary Steve Reece

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Addendum #1: Pastors' Report to Council for May 2025

Official Acts:

Memorial service for Jeanne Narum, May 3

Memorial service for Myrna Otte, May 9

Baptism for Valerie McGuire, May 4

Baptism of Addison Violet Monson, May 25

Worship life

It was a month of celebrations, including concluding services for each of our choirs for the season. Of particular note is how strong adult music participation has been this season, both with the St. Johns' Chorale and with Rejoice Ringers. We continually hear from newcomers how much music, and particularly our congregation's singing, is a draw for this congregation.

We have especially noted this program year that the early/late services are frequently lopsided, except in those instances when there is a 10:45 only event (like confirmation or a baptism). Bethel noted the same pattern this year and is experimenting with a schedule change going forward, moving their second service up by 15 minutes.

Children, Youth and Family programming wrapped up its year with the Sunday School festival atmosphere on Mother's Day, and field trips for the Wednesday programming on May 14. Attention now turns to "bridge" events, VBS and camp in the next two months. Participation in Confirmation and High School Youth group was the most consistent across the year that we have seen since at least pre-COVID. Our focus in Confirmation and High School Youth Group this year was on the varied of relationship you find in the Bible and how we can relate our own relationships to God and others with those stories.

Facilities

The new flooring for the lower level is nearly complete. It's remarkable to see what a difference it makes!

A small kitchen crew is gathering to talk about needed updates and planning for replacement of appliances that are reaching the end of their lifespan.

We continue to await Xcel's correction of our billing to account for our solar panel production. We filed a formal complaint with the CUP in April and have been assigned an advocate. They have acknowledged that we are not being credited yet, but have not given us a timeline for when we can expect to see the correction complete.

Social Concerns

Lighthouse, a new effort led by Isaiah, is working in southern Minnesota to gather faith leaders and faith-based communities around two primary concerns: 1) proposed cuts to our social safety net at the federal and state levels and 2) protection of due process for all Minnesotans. Todd Lippert, who attends

St. John's, is the local organizer for this effort. A number of house gatherings will be happening through the summer for people to learn about this effort.

Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministry leaders are preparing for a new group of people to be trained as Stephen Ministers, beginning in the fall of 2025. Invitations have been sent out to a number of people who have been seen as potential Stephen Ministers. If anyone knows of someone they think would be a good Stephen Minister, please reach out to Pastor Jonathan.

Addendum #2: Treasurer's Report to Council for May 2025

There are no significant issues or concerns at this time.

Total Operating Income is (\$5k) below budget for the month of April and (\$42) below budget YTD.

- Offering:
 - o April offering was (\$7k) below budget.
 - o YTD offering is (\$36k) below budget.
 - o 2025 YTD offering actuals through April are virtually identical to 2024 offering through April.
- Other Income
 - o YTD combined "Other Income" and "other Gifts" are \$16k higher than budget. (\$18k of interest from CDs was deposited in February. This amount was a bit higher than expected. (the principal amounts for these CDs were rolled over for another year). Also, due to the positive response of the Sustaining Grace Capital Campaign, funds have come in more heavily weighted in the first year. This has led to the checking account interest being higher than expected.)
 - o Very few Designated and Foundation Funds have been released so for this year, these items are (\$22k) below budget.

Total Operating Expense is (\$9k) below budget for the month of April, and (\$44k) below budget YTD.

- Personnel is (\$27k) below budget YTD through April. 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 as we are just four months into the year.

Net Income/(loss)

- The Net Income YTD through April is \$2K above budget.

There are no particular areas of concern through April.