

Minutes

Congregation Council

St. John's Lutheran Church, Northfield, MN
February 23, 2016

Present: Brent Nystrom, Ruthie Neuger, Michael Berger, Bill Carlson, Pr. Jon Davis, Pr. Pam Fickenscher, Andrea Hoff, Lynette Marks, Sara Redetzke, Jane Rinehart, Dan VanTassel, Kristy Harms

Absent: Bill Malecha, Joe Gasior, Alyssa Ness

Guest: Bruce Benson, Sharon Flaten, Howard Thorsheim

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Brent Nystrom.

Opening Prayer

Brent Nystrom led us in devotions and an opening prayer.

2. Future dates

- a. Boards – **Tuesday, March 8**, 7:00pm; Fellowship and Treats – *Executive Committee provides treats and Devotion*
- b. Council – **Tuesday, March 15** (one week early), 7:00pm; prayer – Executive Committee

3. Consent Agenda Items for Council

- a. Treasurer's Report; January 2016. Bill Carlson presented the Treasurer's report.
- b. Minutes from the January 12th, 2016 meeting. Reviewed as submitted.

Council approved consent items.

4. Pastors' Reports

Our pastors provided written reports.

Preparation for the congregational annual meeting and Lent represented a large focus.

Current Board structure and governance considerations remain a focus; Does the current structure facilitate relationship-building necessary to permit quick action for the many topics under consideration that are not clearly associated with current Board structure? Kitchen and funeral supervision (Hospitality functions), the Reconciling in Christ conversation process, and refugee sponsorship have a great deal of energy. Further discussion and analysis will occur.

Pr. Davis attended a full week of Stephen Ministry leaders training with Jo Franklin as a required step in moving forward with Stephen Minister training.

Pr. Pam spent 5 days at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center; the opportunity resulted in continuing education on how to do active learning, community building and deep reflection.

Thanks expressed for: Christiania Highview for use of their parlor for the Council retreat; to Mark

Polzin for quick repair of a broken interior window by the church office; Jeff McLaughlin for identification of an improved online contributions link in Church Community Builder; to Jane and Bob Gelle as they officially retired from their roles as funeral team leads.

5. Congregational Mission Visioning and Discussion

Bruce Benson, Sharon Flaten and Howard Thorsheim presented information related to the Refugee Resettlement proposal under consideration.

Bruce, Sharon, Bob Flaten and Howard Thorsheim have conducted discussion with Lutheran Social Services (LSS), Christ Church Lutheran (CCL) and research relative to refugee resettlement. The group is recommending that St. John's commit resources toward current LSS refugee resettlement activities.

A group of 15 St. John's parishioners have committed to participate in the refugee resettlement process.

Motion: We recommend that St. John's Church, in partnership with Christ Church Lutheran in south Minneapolis, enter a formal agreement with Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of MN to become a sponsor/mentor congregation supporting refugees resettling in Minnesota. We recommend approval of a \$4000 contribution for this relationship, conditional to identification of responsible parties to administer this project.

Motion made and seconded. Council approved.

6. Action Items and Updates for Council

- a. Pastor's Housing Designation. Motion: In accordance with IRS regulations, Council approves that Pastoral staff will designate a portion of their salary as housing expense. Jane made the motion, Ruthie seconded the motion. Board approved unanimously.
Pastoral housing allowance designations:
Pam Fickenscher: \$29,640
Jonathan Davis: \$30,000
- b. Thrivent Dollars Designation. Thrivent Dollars are released in March of each year. CY2015 designations by percentage are thought to be: 40% Children and Youth/40% WELCA/20% Capital Fund. Following discussion, motion was made to table the decision for 2016 designations until the March 15, 2016 Council meeting. Moved by Harms, motion seconded by Ruthie Neuger and motion approved by Council.
- c. Refugee Partnership recommendation (see above) Motion proposed and approved by Council. Motion: We recommend that St. John's Church, in partnership with Christ Church Lutheran in south Minneapolis, enter a formal agreement with Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of MN to become a sponsor/mentor congregation supporting refugees resettling in Minnesota. We recommend approval of a \$4000 contribution for this relationship, conditional to identification of responsible parties to administer this project.
- d. Reconciling in Christ (RIC) update. The role of the Council in the Reconciling in Christ process needs further discussion. Pr. Jonathan crafted the Reconciling in Christ Process at St. John's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document that has been made available to the congregation. Brent proposed posting the FAQ to the St. John's website as another source for the information. Jane Rinehart asked for a description of the process for development of a new Welcome Statement. Would a committee be required? Would adoption of the new statement require a vote? Further discussion and consideration around development and

adoption of a new Welcome Statement will occur.

7. Other Business

- a. WELCA representative to Council. Following discussion about the organization structure of WELCA and the many activities of this vibrant group, a motion was made to extend an invitation to WELCA for inclusion as a non-voting member of the Council. Motion: To extend an invitation to WELCA for inclusion as a non-voting member to Council for one consistent representative to Council meetings for an initial period of one year for the purpose of coordination of mission. Bill moved and Dan seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
- b. Continuing dialogue between Council and Staff. Brent recommended continuation of the dialogue between staff and the Council. Jane expressed concern about not burdening staff with another meeting. Andrea noted that the discussion initiated at the Board Retreat was not completed. Concern that the Board agendas may not offer complete representation for Staff concerns and items to the Council. Brent will attend a staff meeting to underscore that the Council supports staff.

8. A closing prayer was offered by Brent Nystrom, and he led us in the Lord's Prayer.

9. Meeting concluded.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Harms