

**St. Stephen's Lutheran Church
Council Meeting January 18, 2022
7:15 PM – through Zoom**

Attendees (Absent):

Pastor John Snider, Pastor Tim Thompson, Merrill Zieman, Jackie Hanson, Jolene Sather
Debbie Pirkel, Joy Stenhaug, Sara Ruff, Beth Hostager, Diane Meyers, Eric Donahue, Jessica
Donahue, Kim Richter, John Anderson, Mary Jo, Tracy Westman, Mark Rogosheske,
Vicki Jackson, Christine Davis, Hannah Ruikka

AGENDA

- Opening Prayer
- Minutes approved 12/15/2021
- Updates from Executive Committee

COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATES: If possible please email prior to meeting (Reply All)

- Pastor Reports – pages 2-4
- Safety - Merrill
- Vision Action Team (VAT) – Pastor Tim
- Property Management – no report
- Christian Education – Christine / page 4
- Youth and Family – John / page 4
- Finance – Diane & Beth /page 5
 - End of year #'s looked great! Thank you for all who gave!
 - Beth walked thru visuals for annual meeting
 - Motion to recommend presentation for congregational Annual Meeting
 - Vicki / John 2nd / discussion / approved
 - Proposed Retrospective Tithe – part of gift committee
 - Presented visuals
 - Motion to recommend retrospective tithe
 - Joy / Diane 2nd / discussion / approved
- Stewardship – Kim
 - Things are going well. Meeting next week.
 - Many end of year donations received.
- Missions – Vicki / page 5
- Worship and Music – page 6
- Fellowship – in person fellowship is on hold at this time.
- Inviting – no report
- Nominating – no report

OTHER BUSINESS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Annal meeting: Zoom / need 35 voting members / Deb volunteer to take minutes

NEXT CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING-----Wednesday, February 16 at 7:15

Respectfully submitted: Joy Stenhaug

Pastor John's Annual Report for 2021

"You will see greater things than these...you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." John 1:50, 51

This is the wonderful promise we celebrate in this Season of Epiphany. Jesus promises his disciples more epiphanies, deeper recognitions of God in our own lives and in the lives of others, through him. This promise has guided us through these very unusual days.

It's almost impossible to believe that this past year we returned to worship (Trinity Sunday, May 30) after **62 Sundays of being closed**. As of today, January 30, 2022, we will have been back in public worship **just over half that many times, 36!** These days have been hard for all of us in many different ways. As the Body of Christ our calling is to relate to others and ourselves, with **grace, mercy and patience**.

What I'm grateful for is the faith that has been at work among us during these days. We are very busy! We continue to be faithful and active in ministry and once these COVID-19 days have become manageable, we'll be ready to **see greater things**.

This past year **our membership** has faithfully stepped forward in vision and stewardship. **Thank you. Thank you** for making possible the hiring of new staff: **Communications and Media Coordinator, Garrett Masters**, and our **Activities Coordinator for Children, Youth and Family, Hannah Ruikka**. Both are wonderful asset to our ministries.

Though the details are listed on other pages of the annual report all of **our leadership and committees** have done great work. When we see all the talent and faithfulness on a single zoom screen for a council or committee meeting we can see how greatly God is blessing us. **Thank you!**

Two new projects that will be completed soon really prepare us to **see greater things**.

1. In a **culture of generosity** is the glass half empty or half full? As people of faith, if pushed, we'd be glass half full people but that doesn't quite do it. We are people that look beyond how much is in the glass to whose glass it is and whose stuff is in the glass. We believe it all as God's. What does God want done with it is our question? God doesn't want it measured and kept but poured out and shared. **A culture of generosity** has a primary focus **not on numbers but on faith**. Looking primarily at numbers leads us to scarcity and fear. Is there ever enough if all of it is ours? Faith allows us to experience the joy of being partners with God in God's abundance.

Our Gift Policy will help us live into a **culture of generosity** with a couple of simply principles. **First:** Undesignated gifts are tithed, 10%, to ministries beyond the doors of St. Stephen's (these ministries are recommended by the Gift Committee and approved by the congregation council). The tithe beyond our doors recognizes that our ministries include partners. We can't do it alone. We give this tithe as encouragement, service to others and as

part of our ministries. **Second:** 10% will also be given to our Foundation. The tithe to the Foundation may seem like an insurance policy for St. Stephen's but we are in the process of studying how to move our Foundation to be a more active of source of ministry.

2. **Our Vision into Action work** is discerning bold and faithful ministries for us to pursue. We are richly blessed with assets. We are then called to be faithful stewards. With the congregation's help and the leadership of our Vision in Action Team (V.A.T.) Sara Ruff (chair) Pastor Tim, Merrill Zieman, Mary Molumby, John Anderson, and me, we are seeking the Lord's leading. You will see more detail about this effort but it is coming to a conclusion and it will soon be time for us to act.

"You will see greater things than these...you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

That's more than we can ask! It is a delight to be in a community where together we are watching for the greater things the Lord has promised! We are preparing for more to come!

Sincerely,

Pastor John

Pastor Tim

Hi Friends -

As an update from the VAT, I've attached a copy of the report I wrote for the Annual Meeting. Work with that team has stepped up recently as we are pushing to complete a draft of the Ministry Plan for Council to review. In addition to that work, I've launched my short-term "Sabbath Explorers" group with five participants, one of whom is a friend of a member from outside the congregation, and led the first of two Open Forums on the Gospel of Luke. I'm also delighted to share that my friends at Liberating Spirit, the micro-church that has been meeting at Willwerscheid Funeral Home for several years, is now going to be gathering in our Chapel Sunday mornings instead! Their first Sunday here will be February 13th. I am working with them and Exec to produce a simple "Agreement of Partnership" document that will put the necessary details into writing for clarity. Lastly, my wife Kisten and I together with her oldest son Chris will be traveling through the South on a "Civil Rights Tour" early in February. I'm planning to collect notes, photos and materials that I can share with the congregation - perhaps as part of an observance of Black History Month.

That's the short version for this month!

Pastor Tim

Education Committee Report 1/19/22

1. The reverse Advent food drive brought in 625 lbs of food to be donated to Neighbors.
2. We have decided to move Faith Formation to a virtual format for the next few weeks. At that point we will evaluate whether a return to in-person is appropriate.
3. The blanket tying project has been postponed until February or March.
4. The Education Committee will meet on January 30th to plan for the spring, including Lent and Holy Week.

Youth and Family Committee Meeting Minutes on 1-13-2022

- Youth group starting this Sunday, 1-16-22, is moving to a virtual format due to Covid concerns. Hannah L. is also changing the time to 3:30 pm, hoping to gain a few more participants.
- Hannah L. and Calvin Mullett are planning on send out an email invite/interest poll for students to join a youth band. The invite will be sent out to all 5th-12th grade students.
- The next tentative activity is scheduled for 2-26-22. Downhill skiing with friend/family at Buck Hill. Hannah is looking into group rates.
- Hannah is also hoping to attend a youth leadership training titled Ignite on 3-11-22 and 3-12-22 in Des Moines, Iowa.
- The next committee mtg. is scheduled for 2-10-22 at 6:30 pm.

The **Finance committee** met on January 6th.

Attached is a summary of the financials for the month of December as well as December YTD.

On a year-to-date basis, total income is above budget by \$4,357 while expenses are below budget by \$36,821.

We have a year-to-date deficit (expense exceeds income) of \$7,120 however, this deficit is roughly \$43,739 less than the budgeted year-to-date deficit of \$50,859 because expenses are down more than income.

Income came in on budget while the favorable expenses relative to budget are driven by Property & Maintenance, Salaries, and Computer Hardware & Repair.

Attached also is the Operating results report for the annual meeting and final budget numbers.

Please let us know if you have questions.

Sincerely,
Beth and Diane

Mission committee report for January, 2022

The mission committee met on January 2, 2022. Those present were Diane Merrill, Jenny Van Pelt and Vicki Jackson.

We talked about Minnesota FoodShare and plan to participate in this again this March. Our donations support the Neighbor's, Inc. food shelf in S. St. Paul. We will encourage cash gifts.

We also discussed a mission month again in May. We will attempt to find short videos about some of the organizations we support and show them during Sunday services.

The recently-completed warm winter gear drive for Garlough and Moreland schools brought in 47 coats plus boots, hats, mittens. These have all been delivered to the schools. Thank you to all who donated.

Respectfully submitted,
Vicki Jackson

From the **Worship** team.

Want to give a huge thank you to Lori Ritt for the beautiful decorating of the sanctuary during the Thanksgiving and Christmas season.

I am looking for volunteers to usher and set up/clean up the Alter area for the months of February through June.

God's Peace,
Mary Jo Martinek