

**St. Stephen's Lutheran Church
Council Meeting February 16, 2022
7:15 PM via 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

Visitor: Norm

AGENDA

- Opening Prayer
- Minutes approved 1/19/2022
- Updates from Executive Committee
- Pastors Housing allowance
 - Motion to approve housing allowance: \$60,000 for Pastor John / \$7,000 for Pastor Tim
 - Motion by Deb / 2nd by Beth / discussion / motion carried
- Foundation update

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

- Pastors Reports - See pages 2-3
- Safety
- Vision Action Team (VAT)
- Property Management – Eric
 - Continue to work on improving heat costs
- Christian Education – Christine
- Youth and Family – John A
- Finance - Beth
- Stewardship - Kim
- Missions – Vicki
- Worship and Music – Mary Jo
 - Still need ushers and alter helpers
- Fellowship – no report
- Inviting – no report
- Nominating

OTHER BUSINESS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEXT CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING-----Wednesday, March 16, 2022 at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Joy Stenhaug

Pastor John
February 16, 2022

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus.” (1st Cor. 1:3-4)

These words begin 1st Corinthians. We can borrow these powerful words because we are in the same, powerful and life-changing calling of faith. Ours is an eternal endeavor and it is a privilege to share that with you.

We’ve been doing lots of great ministry together during these strange Covid years, which are hopefully coming to an end; and we’ve been doing lots that’s preparing us to faithfully and further respond to God’s callings. We’ve been tuning up the church’s engine, it’s starting to sound great, ready to leave the garage. Here are a couple of examples:

1. Our **Annual Meeting**. Sure, it was the longest on record but it was also full of deeply caring, thoughtfully engaged people. So many of the right questions were being asked about our finances, our mission and our boldness! While we don’t have all the answers yet, those are the very questions we’ve been working with. Some of these answers are about to emerge through our new **Gift Policy**, the almost finished **VAT** recommendations, and the renewal of the St. Stephen’s **Foundation**. Despite its length, it was a meeting characterized by commitment, not chaos. God was at work.
2. Our **Conference Meeting**. Admittedly, not a usual suspect for inspiration. Despite the meeting being 12 minutes long, convened from an ice house, and 20% of the participants being from St. Stephen’s, there was an awesome indication. Pastor Justin Grimm, our synod representative and avid ice fisherman, mentioned that there were grants available for congregations to apply for. Two of our members immediately had ideas. They weren’t ideas that came out of the blue but were birthed from the work already available through our, not yet presented, VAT efforts. Another affirmation. Whether these grants get submitted, there were only 2 days left in the process, how at hand and enthusiastically these ministries were embraced! It was humbling. God at work again.
3. **Faithful Connections**. Pastor Chris and Linda Becker are going to train and organize a calling program for us, increasing our “faithful connections.” We’ve had various expressions of this in the past, what a wonderful opportunity to re-energize and re-shape it. Their version includes out reach beyond our homebound members. They will present their plans at the **Open Forum on March 13** and will hold a training on **Saturday morning, April 2**. God’s blessings again!
4. **Synod Toolkit**. Saturday, February 26th, 8:30-12:15 p.m. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Burnsville. This is a very practical, resourcing tool for congregational leaders. Over the years we have gained some excellent ideas. Registration is possible on the synod website: [2022 Tool Kit Workshops - Saint Paul Area Synod, ELCA \(spas-elca.org\)](https://www.spas-elca.org) You won’t regret attending.

Paul concludes 1st Corinthians with, ***“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. May love be with all of you in Christ Jesus.”*** (1st Cor. 16:23-24) Amen and amen!

Pastor Tim

February 15, 2022

I returned on Friday from a week in the south visiting Civil Rights museums and significant locations. This was a wonderful trip, both sobering and inspiring. I'm looking forward to sharing my experiences with the congregation at an upcoming Open Forum.

The Vision team held a focus group on Sunday February 6th on the topic of Facilities Improvements. A good number of feedback forms with rankings and ratings for many items were turned in and I will be collating that information for the Team to work with. The final focus group will take place this Sunday the 20th with a focus on Worship. If you are able, please plan to attend!

My short-term "Sabbath Explorers" group has been a delight. With 3 of 4 sessions completed this will wrap up on Saturday the 26th. The time, schedule and format appears to be working well so I anticipate offering this again in the future. (Let me know if you're interested.)

Liberating Spirit Christian Community had their first gathering at St. Stephen's this Sunday and they are all delighted to be here. The Partnership Agreement is getting final revisions and will be in place very soon. I'm looking forward to introducing the two congregations to each other in the coming weeks.

Blessings!

Education Committee Report 2/16/22

1. We sent out a survey to families to get an idea about the comfort level of returning to in-person Faith Formation. There was a slight preference for remaining virtual, so it was decided to stay virtual for two more weeks and then return to in-person. The first night back in-person will be Wednesday the 16th and it will be game night. The following week we will be making a craft and then we will move on with Lent programming.
2. For Lent this year the theme is GEMS of Luther's Small Catechism. Each week will focus on a different piece: Confession, the Ten Commandments, Apostle's Creed, Lord's Prayer, Baptism, and Communion. Each person will receive a copy of the Small Catechism on Ash Wednesday and a small gem each week. We are encouraging families to worship together on Wednesdays and participate in all of Holy Week.
3. Activity nights: February - Game night; March - no activity due to Lent schedule; April - open; May – celebration Blanket tying will be postponed until next year. We have decided to let the Faith Formation students vote on which organization receives the blankets. If you have an organization you would like to nominate, please let me know.
4. The move to virtual learning brought with it a bonus! Pastor John and Pastor Tim have been visiting with the classes and the experience has been enjoyed by all. We are considering ways to keep this going, and including Salem's new interim pastor, Pastor Scott.
5. We are planning for an in-person Vacation Bible School experience this summer. Salem and St. Stephen's will work together on this, as we have been doing for the past few years. We are trying something new this summer; rather than schedule VBS each day of one week, it will be one evening a week for five weeks. Our hope is that this will allow more people to participate!
6. Another new twist on a familiar activity we are planning is a new way of doing sermon notes. This sermon notebook will help kids organize and get more out of their sermon notes. We plan for them to be kept at church so they are always available, but they could also be taken home or to any church the student attends. We are currently exploring funding options, including the possibility of using a Thrivent grant.
<https://store.notconsumed.com/products/sermon-notebook-for-kids?variant=26473697800>

Youth and Family Committee Meeting Minutes on 2-10-2022

- Youth group has been in the virtual format for the past 5 Sundays. They have been having lots of fun playing Minecraft together and socializing. Hannah L. is also changing the Youth Group time back to 10:30 am on Sundays starting on 2-20-22.
- Hannah L. sent out an email invite/interest poll for students to join a youth band. At this time wind instruments musicians would not be included in the group due to Covid.
- Tubing at Buck Hill is the next youth activity scheduled for 2-27-22. Also known as “Northern Lights Tubing”. Hannah is purchasing 10 tickets for the group and planning to purchase more tickets if needed. Hannah is sending out an email to invite youth, family and friends. She is also passing the information on to Jan to invite others in the Sunday bulletin. We will also announce the opportunity at the next Faith night gathering on the 16th of February.
- Feed My Starving Children is scheduled on March 26th at 7 PM with 11 spots reserved.
- Hannah purchased a bible study unit titled Seamless. The course has 7 sessions in the unit. She is planning on starting the unit on 2-20-22.
- Hot Cross Buns sale/fundraiser is being planned for 4-10-22, Palm Sunday. With preparation on 4-9-22. Sales would take place after the Palm Sunday service.
- The next committee mtg. is scheduled for 3-10-22 at 7:30 pm.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee did not meet in the month of February.

Currently, the monthly budget is not available.

Here is the high level of the January financials :

Total Income	\$32,276.37	General Envelope	\$28,489.00
Total Expense	\$46,129.92	Most of the expenses: Salaries & Property M. (Gas Charges \$4,850)	
Net Income	(\$13,853.55)		

Stewardship Committee

Stewardship met over zoom on 2/07 and included Garrett in our meeting. The main purpose was to learn more about the Storytelling and Communication seminar (Part 1 of 2) Debbie and Garrett attended and how it might apply to our plans going forward this year and beyond. We generated some great ideas and got off to a great start.

We initiated a task force who will meet this week for the first time to review our current communication in relation to storytelling - are we informing, asking, thanking, or inspiring. Each word has its purpose, but it's about balance and we are going to explore messaging around stewardship and communication efforts.

From there we will be kicking off some fun ideas to incorporate storytelling more and involving our church membership. With Garrett on board, and a new website being created, our enthusiasm is off and running.

Missions committee report for February 2022

The mission committee met on January 30, 2022. Diane Merrill and Vicki Jackson were present. We approved the mission benevolence budget for 2022 of \$39,128. The amount our congregation gives is based on 10% of the prior year's giving. The amount of our benevolence giving for this year is as follows:

ELCA	\$14,400
Neighbor's, Inc.	1,000
Lutheran World Relief	3,800
Camp Wapogasset	2,000
Interfaith Action	500
Lutheran Mideast Development	5,000
LSS	4,400
Luther Seminary	2,000
Union Gospel Mission	600
Ihimbo/Iwonde congregations	2,285
Loaves and Fishes	500
Mobile Meals	1,000
Lutheran Campus Ministries	1,000
Feed My Starving Children	500
undesignated fund	143
Total	<hr/> \$39,128