

# ST STEPHEN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

## CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022

### MINUTES

1. Call to order; verify quorum (Merrill)
  - a. Quorum verified with 58 voting members in attendance in the Sanctuary and on Zoom.
  - b. Meeting called to order at 10:43 a.m.
2. Opening prayer (Pastor John)
3. Review and approve minutes from January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021 Annual meeting (Merrill)  
M/T. Gibson; S/K. Merrill; Approved
4. Summary Recap of 2021 (Merrill)
  - a. Church was closed for 62 Sundays in a row since March 2020, open for 36 Sundays
  - b. Please read Annual Report for committee highlights
5. Pastor and Staff Comments (Pastor John, Pastor Tim)
  - a. Pastor John
    - i. Reflects on past two years, strange ways of meeting and getting things done
    - ii. "Even God can't steer a parked car", we have been parked in the garage for a long time, it's time to start revving our engine again
    - iii. Highlights work done on Gift Policy development; Vision to Action process, Stewardship for All Seasons
    - iv. It is time for us to do some bold, faithful ministry!
  - b. Pastor Tim
    - i. Look at the "Big Picture"
    - ii. Sees days of importance in many areas:
      1. Move towards racial justice, actions by companies, local governments and residents are beginning to address this issue
      2. Climate change and energy economy shifts
      3. Politics and science, media and Covid creating difficult arena to live in
      4. Broader church – Christian nationalism, transformation of the church itself
    - iii. The Church needs to focus on providing a refuge for people during these times of turmoil; provide a response, follow what Jesus is telling us to do
6. Safety Committee Report (Roberta Meyers)
  - a. Committee formed in the Spring of 2020 to develop plans for gathering in church
  - b. 2021 was a busy year in responding to the vaccine, requiring masks in the building, giving guidance to groups meeting in the church
  - c. Guiding principle: make decisions based on science and medical information and recommendation from applicable agencies

7. Stewardship Report (Kim via video)
  - a. Grateful for the success of the *Always Connected* goals and *Growing Connections* campaign
  - b. The committee's goal is about growing generosity
  - c. Your support helps St Stephen's take care of its connections with the community, improve our ministry, make a difference in the world
  - d. Stewardship is always in action at St Stephen's
  
8. 2021 Financial Report (Beth and Diane)
  - a. Budget expected a \$51,000 deficit, Actual result was a \$7,000 deficit
  - b. Income was \$7,000 higher than expected due to receiving 2 payments from ISD 197 Encore program for Noreen Center usage (2020-21 & 2021-22 school years)
  - c. Expenses were \$37,000 lower than budget, main drivers were lower Salaries due to open positions and historically low HVAC and maintenance costs
  
9. 2022 Budget Presentation (Beth and Diane)
  - a. Overall budget expects a deficit of \$60,000
  - b. Income expected to be lower than 2021 by \$7,000 as we only expect one payment from Encore in 2022
  - c. Expenses are expected to be higher than 2021 by \$47,000. Drivers are a full year of Staff Salaries and Benefits, \$10,000 for consultant for facility renovations, a return to average HVAC and maintenance costs, and higher utility costs (electric and gas)
  - d. Dedicated Reserves total \$893,500, an increase of \$85,000 in 2021 due to estate giving and memorial gifts
  - e. Discussion:

R. Nelson: Based on Balance Sheet and Foundation reports, St Stephen's has \$1.4 million in assets which should be celebrated. Are we being good stewards of these assets? Our vision planning should include a long-term financial vision. Can we be bold in investing in the future? How can we inspire members to contribute to the church, foundation, etc.

M/R. Nelson; S/J. Packer

Discussion:

C. Becker would encourage committees to tell stories of how the budget dollars are being used in real-life situations. Where are contributions towards Tanzania Scholarships reflected in the financials?

Response: Scholarships are part of Dedicated Reserves as "pass-thru" contributions, as money comes in it is sent directly to the sponsored organization

Motion to adopt the 2022 Budget was Approved
  
10. New business:
  - a. Gift Policy (Merrill)

This policy came about to give members information about what will be done with their gifts to St Stephen's. Details of the policy are included in the Annual Report on pages 35 - 36. Council unanimously approved the policy to be brought before the Congregation.

M/K. Merrill; S/R. Nelson; Approved

- b. Retrospective Gifts (Beth)  
Proposal to recognize Undesignated Gifts given over the years which total \$579,000 and tithed 10% to the Foundation and 10% to Missions, for a total of \$99,000.  
M/J. Anderson/C. Davis; S/D. McKenzie  
Discussion:  
D. McKenzie asked if gifts can be designated for a specific cause, ie. Solar panels.  
Response: Designated gifts received will be gratefully accepted and are reviewed every 3 years for relevance. If the cause is no longer relevant, the gift will be updated to Undesignated.  
What is the vision for St Stephen's future? People would be more likely to include gifts in their estate plans if they knew the plans.  
Response: The Vision to Action Team is working on plans for the next 3 to 5 years. Beyond that is not in scope for this task group.  
Motion to adopt the Retrospective Gift proposal was Approved
- b. Conference Assemblies for Voting Members  
Online via Zoom | Saturday, February 12 10:00 am  
**4 Delegates needed**  
1. Debbie Pirkel  
2. Bryon Dockter  
3. Darcy McKenzie  
4. Merrill Ziemann
- c. The Saint Paul Area Synod—2022 Tool Kit for Congregational Leaders  
In Person (masks required) | Saturday, February 26 8:30 am-12:15 pm  
Prince of Peace, Burnsville  
**No cost to attend—open to all**  
Merrill will e-mail a list of the Tool Kit topics and registration information
- d. Annual Synod Assembly  
Friday-Saturday, May 13-14  
St. Andrew's, Mahtomedi  
**2 Delegates needed**  
1. Brenda Gieser  
2. Mary Jo Martinek  
3. Merrill Ziemann, alternate
- e. Vision to Action Team (Pastor Tim)  
i. Four Areas of Focus: Connect to our neighborhood through service; Build and deepen relationships with each other at St. Stephen's; Enhance our vibrant worship experiences; 4. Make improvements to the facilities  
ii. Tim will take comments from this meeting back to the team, specifically about including financial objectives in the Visioning process

11. Closing prayer (Pastor Tim)

12. Adjournment

Minutes recorded and submitted by Debbie Pirkel, Financial Secretary