

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church
Parish Council Meeting March 18, 2020
7:15 PM – 8:15 PM – via ZOOM

Psalm 32:8

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you."

Pastor John Snider, Pastor Tim Thompson, Gary Westman, Merrill Zieman, Sue Clark, Debbie Pirkel, Joy Stenhaug, Mary Molumby, Teresa Tschida, Sara Ruff, Joanna Mead, Beth Hostager, Diane Meyers, Dave Paton, Eric Donahue, Jessica Donahue, Kim Richter, Lori Ritt, John Anderson, Annette Youness, Tracy Westman, Ali Schloesser-Brecht, Mark Rogosheske

AGENDA

- 1) Opening prayer / Devotional (Pastor John)**

- 2) Minutes approved – February 19, 2020 meeting (Gary) – approved**

- 3) Updates from Executive Committee**
 - a) New Office Hours 9:00 am to 3:00 pm
 - b) Building Security System Installation
 - i) Installation almost complete
 - ii) Review/training on system on Friday March 20 at 9am.
 - iii) May have some add-on items: example keypad on North door.
 - c) Coronavirus Response
 - i) Importance of "Be the Church"
 - ii) Physical Distancing – Not social distancing
 - iii) Continuation and expansion of on-line services
 - iv) New program to begin temporary name: St. Stephen's Connect
 - (1) Identify volunteers for calling and having conversations with our members
 - (2) Scripted outline with Bible verse to share, along with opening conversation starters to connect with our members, beginning our focus with our more isolated members
 - (3) Some questions will be: Ask what their needs are. How can we help?
 - (4) Pastor John reviewed email that was sent to council members that contained suggestions and how to monitor.
 - (5) Pastor Tim – he could create a google form to collect data received.
 - (6) Volunteers so far: Dave Paton, Merrill, Kim R, Diane M, Cathy Packer, Sara R
 - d) Identify opportunities in our community to support – advertise to our members
 - i) Neighbors – Dave P is not sure how they are operating right now. Please refer to website.
 - ii) Send letter to members requesting Callers and/or servant volunteers.

- e) Updates on Web Page, Targeted mailings, Monthly Newsletter, front sign update
- f) Executive Committee in continuous contact and will meet as needed – we need to be flexible to adapt and change as necessary

4) Committee Reports/Updates – Please email updates in advance of meeting

a) Pastor Reports

- i) **Pastor John** – many efforts going on during these COVID-19 days
 - (1) Jan’s sister funeral is this week, please keep her and family in prayer

March Council email from Pastor John

Looking back and looking forward this month turns on **Thursday, March 12**. As we met for All Committee Night our plan was to have worship on the 15th with nothing more than enhanced hygiene. By 3 p.m. the 13th the Executive Committee had unanimously decided to not have public meetings, public programs or worship for two Sundays, the 15 and the 22.

Before March 12 we were celebrating many great things, Lutheran Mideast Development, the reception of Pamela Beard’s life and her gift to us, our Lenten worship, including using the chapel for the 11 a.m. Wednesday service and the beginning of our Stewardship for All Seasons work. All very exciting.

After March 12 we have been working hard to change the way we are church together. The church, the Body of Christ, is always open, we are finding new ways to be that community, to love our neighbors as ourselves.

We are doing this together! This is a shared calling. We need everyone’s ideas, everyone’s promptings of the Spirit. Together we are the church of Jesus Christ and when these days are past, we want to look back and recognize that we were led by God.

Here are a few thoughts:

1. I am very pleased we closed when we did. That night they moved the limit for gathering to 50 people, the next day to 10. This is what love of neighbor looks like: don’t even chance spreading the virus.
2. Wonderful help being an online St. Stephen’s
 - a. TV, DVD, Facebook.
 - i. Other options to consider: Zoom, conference call
 - b. We need to put bulletin resources on the webpage
3. Calling Tree to check in on all members?
 - a. Conversations, connections, check in.
 - b. Who makes the calls?
 - c. Some could become ongoing.
 - d. Are there seniors who need help getting connected?
4. Ministry options. Are there ways St. Stephen’s could help in small groups? Which organizations and processes might work? Are there any?
5. Emphasize, promote, the work Pastor Tim has available now. Online book study and small groups.
6. Financial support for ministry of St. Stephen’s

- a. Encourage automated giving
- b. What is our process for offerings through the mail
- c. Establishing text giving?

Going ahead, we are official not public through Saturday, March 28. That will need to be readdressed, no doubt.

The church is not closed, the church of Jesus Christ is never closed, we are experimenting with new ways of sharing the great good news!

Glad we have you on the team!

Pastor John

- ii) **Pastor Tim** – any questions regarding email, please contact

Report to Council - March 2020 from Pastor Tim

I was musing about the idea of distancing as a way of loving the neighbor and something struck me: one of the neighbors we're loving in this way is the health care professional. In Italy, I understand that since the healthcare system has been overwhelmed, it has become necessary to choose which patients receive what kind of care. Just as in wartime, doctors end up having to choose who will get the ventilator and who will not. For these medical professionals - healers and caregivers - who are already beyond exhausted to also have to endure making those kind of decisions... my heart goes out to them. So now, here in our own place and time, our actions will greatly determine how much moral and ethical distress our healers will have to endure for our sake.

Love of neighbor means so much more than we can imagine, I think.

- My own work at St. Stephen's has taken a sharp turn towards technology and social media. I'm gratified that I have these gifts to share.
- I'm working with Shawn Haarsted, Keith Gregory and Norm Goetzke to improve our ability to live stream worship. These guys are the best!
- I've stepped into a more central role in managing our online presence through Facebook. We have more going on here than I think we've been aware of! Our page has over 300 followers and our first try at live streaming (Sunday's worship service) has so far had 569 views! (It may be that watching even just a few minutes of the video is counted as a "view" but still, that's a lot of clicks!) Also, after the live stream has ended, the video remains stored on our Facebook site so that people can view it at any time later on.
- You may not be aware, but live streaming is an interactive experience. People are free to comment and react to what they are seeing in real time. Last Sunday, when Debbie Pirkl proclaimed; "The peace of the Lord... is with you all," one viewer responded with the comment "And also with you." Another viewer reacted in the middle of the sermon, saying; "Quotable, "We are in the middle of a Global Lent." Amen Pr John!"
- We have recently begun to make more use of the Zoom video conferencing platform at St. Stephen's. I have used it for some time for my discipleship work and more recently for the two book discussions I am leading. Now it is becoming more common as a tool for meetings. To make this more accessible to people in the church building I have ordered for the church a

Chromebook (simplified web-based laptop) which is an excellent and easy way to host Zoom meetings. I expect to have this set up within a week and will eagerly train anyone who wants to know how to use it to "zoom in" to meetings you may be holding at church.

- I recently learned that Zoom allows you to begin with a large group of participants all in one "room," and then have people "break out" into different rooms for separate conversations. That's exactly what we've been doing in person on Wednesday nights for faith formation: begin with large group, then break off into classes. I will be learning how to do this myself tomorrow. You can imagine the possibilities...
- Another point of interest around Zoom: this morning I attended a Zoom meeting hosted by staff from the Minneapolis and St. Paul Area Synods. The topic was issues and strategies around the Coronavirus, of course. There were over 200 people "attending" the meeting! The meeting allowed for Q&A with the speakers and was recorded for later viewing. Again... imagine the possibilities.
- this bullet point represents the one or more things I'm forgetting at the moment. ;)

It is certainly true that Facebook does not reach every member of the congregation. But in the absence of our Sunday gatherings, I expect it is now the single largest "common space" in which our people are present and connecting. So I specifically request that all council members join Facebook if you are not already on and "like" the St. Stephen's page. We need to be *present* to our people, and this is one important way. By doing this, we can reduce the sense of isolation that the physical distancing will produce by increasing our relational connectedness. In addition to this, of course, I believe we will want to increase the other ways we also communicate with the congregation: email, postal, phone calls etc.

On a personal note, I myself am in a vulnerable population, both by virtue of turning 60 last summer, but more so because of my diabetes. So I will be limiting my time in the church building going forward.

In the midst of these tremendous challenges, I see even greater opportunities for us to be Church and bear witness to the love of Jesus to our neighbors. Let's keep our eyes open to what the Lord may be doing and be ready to follow where he leads in the days to come!

Blessings -

Pastor Tim

b) Property & Maintenance – security/see above 3b

c) Christian Education – Tracy/Mary:

- i) 8th grade girls and 2 mentors meet on zoom.

Email from Tracy Westman

Education Committee Notes:

We have not met but these are things that I (Tracy) has done since our "new reality" has started.

- 1) All Families emailed with information about online devotionals that they could assess as a family
- 2) Email all faith leaders (who directly teach the kids) with the same information that the families received.
- 3) Each faith leader also received (via an email) their direct students contact information that they have in their class. Faith Leaders now have contact info (email, phone, address and phone number) for the students they have been meeting with on Wednesday nights. That is about 3-7 students per teacher. My thought in doing this is that

each faith leader can contact their kids. I have not formally given any directive at this time. I have not sent out any other emails because I know how many families are currently receiving from the school district. I will be encouraging contact between faith leaders and their direct students.

INFO FROM ISD#197 TO FAMILIES ABOUT MEAL SITUATION:

(This is my notes) Here is what the school district is planning on doing. This is taken from the email sent to families. It looks like the district has breakfast and lunch taken care of for those that need. Any student under the age of 18 can walk into (or will be met at the door) with a breakfast and/or lunch. They do not need to attend that school--- they can walk up to any school. They will not be entering the buildings it is a grab and go situation. Healthcare/emergency workers have some childcare offered at school. Groups are under 5 people.

From District: Breakfast and Lunch

Starting Wednesday, March 18, every School District 197 school as well as Community of Saints will offer “grab and go” breakfast from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. and “grab and go” lunch from 11:30 [a.m.to](#) 12:30 p.m. Monday through Friday from their front entrances. This is available to all students 18 and under. Students do not need to go to their school; instead, they can go to any school in the district or Community of Saints to pick up their meals. Children of healthcare of emergency workers who will be taking part in district childcare at the schools will be provided with breakfast and lunch.

d) Youth & Family

- i) Ali - Working on if ZOOM would work for Sunday youth gathering
- ii) John A: had a couple fund raiser’s planned but are currently post-poned.

e) Finance – Diane/Beth

- i) Beth: reviewed online giving on website. There is some work that needs to be done. Checking with Jan if she is still an admin for site. Dean checking security on website.

Finance Committee Notes.

The Finance Committee meeting was cancelled for March 12th. Beth and Diane talked over the phone on that evening about the February financial reports. Below is a summarized version of the February Income statements being compared to February ~~2019~~. The budget numbers are not currently available.



St. Stephen's Lutheran Church

February YTD Income and Expense

Acct #	Account Name	2019 Feb YTD	2020 Feb YTD	20 vs 19 Change	Comment
	Contributions Total	64,965	82,630	17,665	Timing (large annual donation in Feb in 2020, March in 2019).
	Other Income Total	8,564	6,620	-1,945	Timing (extra payment in 2019)
	TOTAL INCOME	73,529	89,250	15,721	Timing (large donation and ATT Tower income)
	TOTAL EXPENSE	88,025	91,703	3,678	
	INCOME LESS EXPENSE	-14,495	-2,453	12,042	

Respectfully submitted by:
Beth ~~Hostager~~ and Diane Meyers

f) Stewardship- Kim:

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Our committee was going to meet with not just the committee but also the task force. We attended an SAS strategy meeting that gave us some great ideas and energy but also gave us some focus points to start working on.

We cancelled our meeting planned for 3/12 due to concerns w/CO-V.

Pastor John had a conversation w/Peter on 3/12 and had further ideas arise that will benefit our planning over the coming months. Homework was assigned to the task force. Our next meeting will be held via ZOOM.

Our committee wishes to be involved with any work around planning to support our community and missions, which can actually, simultaneously be part of our strategic planning concepts going forward.

Thanks!

Kim

g) Missions – Dave

- i) MN food share month.

h) Worship & Music – Lori/Pastor John

- i) We are on track for LENT
- ii) We will continue to live stream on FB. Great team working on improvements to feed.

i) Inviting – via email:

The Inviting Committee met with Pastor John, Steve M. and myself. We are working on storage for the new Nativity scene. Our conclusion is that our Church needs a storage area house cleaning. We will coordinate some ideas with Eric and keep you informed with our progress.

On a personal note, I am concerned about those members that are not Web connected and am willing to help keep them informed. All that's needed is some direction/plan.

Thanks,

Mark Rogo

j) Fellowship – Sara

- i) Did not meet this month. We are standing by for what is needed.

k) Nominating – no update

5) Important Dates

Next Council Meeting – Wednesday, April 15 @ 7:15 pm

6) Adjourn