

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church
Parish Council Meeting September 16, 2020
7:15 PM – 8:15 PM – through Zoom

Attendees (Absent):

Pastor John Snider, Pastor Tim Thompson, Gary Westman, Merrill Zieman, Sue Clark, Debbie Pirkel, Joy Stenhaus, 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) – listening prayer: celebrations/concerns**
- 2) Minutes approved – August 19, 2020 meeting (Gary)**
- 3) Updates from Executive Committee**
 - a) Cell Phone Tower Lease
 - b) Agreed to 2 year contract extension with Ali and Ben.
 - c) Coronavirus Response/Reopening Plans – Safety Committee – Merrill
 - i) 22 different groups using the church at this time.
 - ii) Funerals/communion gatherings are going very well.
 - iii) Next group could be baptisms.
 - iv) More discussion how to open up church with possible.
- 4) Committee Reports/Updates – Please email updates in advance of meeting**
 - a) Pastor Reports:
 - i) Pastor Tim – see page 4
 - ii) Pastor John – see page 3
 - b) Property & Maintenance – Jessica
 - i) Working on date for tree/parking lot lights
 - ii) Elevator inspection completed and good
 - c) Christian Education – Mary
 - i) 31 students registered for faith formation
 - (1) Wee Wonder meeting via zoom on Sundays
 - (2) Preschool – 5th meeting via zoom on Wednesdays
 - (3) Confirmation will be a combination of zoom & in person on Wednesday s
 - ii) First online family worship will be Wednesday September 16th
 - iii) Preparing to confirm our 9th graders this fall. There are 11 students total
 - d) Youth & Family – John
 - i) Ali working on starting a youth group

e) Finance – Beth/Diane

- i) On a year-to-date basis, total income and total expense are both approximately \$34,000 below budget. As a result, the YTD deficit of -\$35,942 is fairly consistent with the YTD budgeted deficit.
- ii) The main driver of the unfavorable YTD income variance is general envelope contributions which are \$21,000 lower than budget.
- iii) The main driver of the favorable YTD expense variance is Property & Maintenance expenses which are \$19,000 lower than budget.

f) Stewardship – Kim

- i) Team working hard at fulfilment of tasks in preparation for our campaign.
- ii) 2020 giving statements will be out next week.

g) Missions –

- i) See page 5

h) Worship & Music – no report

- i) Byron and Ben are doing a great job!

i) Inviting – no report

j) Fellowship – no report

- i) Don't forget zoon coffee hour on Sunday

k) Nominating

5) Important Dates

St. Paul Area Synod Assembly Online – September 25-26

- Need a volunteer. Zoom session training Tuesday
- Merrill and Brenda G will be attending

Next Council Meeting – Wednesday, October 21, 7:15 PM

6) Adjourn

Thank you! Thank you for the **faithful leadership and commitments** you have given during these difficult and challenging days; 27 Sundays so far of doing things in new ways.

It is a time of testing. Not in a pass/fail sort of way, but in the testing that **strengthens and transforms**. I've been encouraged by the ongoing trust in God and the deepening sense of how important we are to each other that permeates the life of St. Stephen's. These days clear up our priorities.

Here are a few of the many areas where we saw such leadership.

- **Holy Communion** by appointment. This has begun slowly but very powerfully as people respond to their spiritual hunger for Jesus' meal.
- The remarkable work **Tracy** and so many others have been doing around **Faith Formation** in this new day. It starts tonight. It follows the great command of Matthew 28, ***"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*** The teaching will be done, Jesus will be with us, even on Zoom!
- The **Safety Committee's** careful work, in a constantly changing context which has now created protocols and practices that have allowed for 2 funerals with a third tomorrow. Their care and courage is about loving our neighbors as ourselves and the importance of the church to a family in grief.
- **Men's Nonbreakfast Breakfast** has met three times at St. Stephen's and is an example of how these days clarify our need for each other. This Friday we are testing our connections by wading into some of the divisive topics of our day. The point is that in a divided time isn't the church the best place for love over politics; to celebrate our unity in Christ not in opinion? This is a very real spiritual lift but we are ready to try.
- The **Stewardship Committee**, especially the leadership core of **Kim and Debbie**, are giving us the opportunity to strengthen our foundation of faithful generosity. You remember meeting Pastor Peter Reuss (life before the pandemic?), he is guiding them through lots and lots of work which you will soon see. Faithful generosity isn't the business we are in, it's what life is all about!
- **God's Work our Hands, Dave, the Missions Committee** with special help from **Jan**, really led in these challenging times. The Noreen Center took on another beautiful appearance as a place where blood donations were collected. The Fellowship Hall did the same for the care kits. It was terrific to be back in these spaces with other members of the Body of Christ, leading, serving, and caring. (The Noreen Center is now the child care center for ISD 197 for first tier workers and teachers: 33 kids between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m.)

There are so many additional expressions of leadership and commitments, ongoing faithful acts of ministry in our **lay leaders, members** and **staff**. Let us recognize and be grateful for them all. May these times of testing not be wasted. May we be transformed to see God's love and our love for our neighbors as the foundation of life?

Pastor Tim Report to Council – Sept 16, 2020

Term Call Renewal

– My two-year, part time term call is concluding next month on October 16th. It's my understanding that the desire is to renew that call and I am very much in favor of that myself! I am very grateful for the opportunity to serve at St. Stephens.

Teaching Series – My primary focus continues to be on the four-week teaching series that I launched on September 6th. The overall focus is on Relationships and Community, and the first lesson on “Why relationships are so important” was well received. When the series wraps up on October 18th, I will have some opportunities ready for those who want to take action to invest more deeply in their faith-based relationships. Here is how I described the planned opportunities in last month's report:

The “Listening Prayer Taster” is a four week workshop of sorts, 30 minutes each week, simply to introduce people to a modified “highs and lows” check-in that involves a time of listening to God for guidance on what to share. At the end of the four weeks I will help people to form small groups where they can use this practice as a way to support each other as spiritual friends and in prayer.

The other opportunity will be to begin exploring ways to form more substantial small communities within the congregation while still respecting the limitations on safe gatherings. This could take a number of different forms. For example, people could gather weekly online as a small group for a “watch party” around Sunday worship or The Well. That would then be the basis for their own conversation together and sharing joys and concerns etc. If that is done online on Zoom for example, there would be no concern over social distancing.

I have a strong interest in seeing how we might encourage people to form small, home-based faith groups, and I have been in touch with the Safety Team to consider that. With the current state of the pandemic, it's unfortunately not something that can really be proposed at this point. I will continue to consult with them on when and how there might be safe ways to move in that direction down the road.

Blessings!

Addenda: Online participation metrics as of the end of August.

Your Missions Committee was FINALLY able to get a few activities off the ground for God's Work Our Hands Sunday!

Thanks to all who either helped set up or participated in these activities!

COVID-19 and all the good and bad information out there made it more difficult but what's new there? Our blood drive held on 9/11 saved lives! Of the 43 who committed, 36 were "tapped" for their blood. The others were "deferred" for a variety of reasons including current prescriptions and one who was turned away due to high blood pressure! (That was my son, Ben, who recently learned he's going to be a Father so I fully understand). That they were deferred makes no difference in terms of their commitments made so THANK YOU TO ALL!

I hope that all who gave found it to be a good experience and I'm wondering if we should do this more often? Annually? Semi-annually? Please let me know of your thoughts on this if you have them.

Another new activity that seemed to lend itself well to the current time is an assembly event that we did for Neighbors Inc.. This particular event focused on a "personal care" kit which included bar soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, razor, and shampoo. These items were placed in gallon-size ziplock bags for the folks at Neighbors Inc to distribute as they see fit. 12 volunteers assembled 96 KITS! Susan Schroeder, Director of Mission Fulfillment at Neighbors Inc. was VERY appreciative of this as many may not realize how expensive these items are relative to the many choices that have to be made every day by those that we and Neighbors Inc. serve. Just as with the blood drive, this is an area where we can really do some good for our LOCAL community. We could expand these assembly projects to include a diaper kit, laundry soap, and feminine products as well. Just as I said above, let me know of your interest. Raising your hand only means you would like to participate in the future in the event we keep on.

We're going to step back and take a breath but we'll be back soon with more Missions stuff. The blood drive idea was from our own John Anderson so thanks to John for that. As I've said before, you all provide our best ideas so keep them coming!

Thanks again for all your support and participation and a SPECIAL thanks to Jan Perkins for ALL OF HER HELP in setting these activities up!

Your Missions Committee
Vicki Jackson
Dave Paton
Jenny VanPelt

(There's ample room here for you too!)