

**St. Stephen's Lutheran Church**  
**Parish Council Meeting March 17, 2021**  
**7:35 PM – 8:35 PM – through Zoom**

**Attendees (Absent):**

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, Eric Donahue, Jessica Donahue, Kim Richter, Lori Ritt, John Anderson, Annette Youness, Tracy Westman, Mark Rogosheske, Vicki Jackson

**AGENDA**

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

**2) Minutes approved – February 17, 2021 meeting (Gary)**

**3) Updates from Executive Committee**

- a) Status of Communications Coordinator & Dir of Children & Youth Formation positions
  - i) Received applications for each. Hire/interview committee in place
- b) Need Council Approval of Pastors' Housing Allowance 2021
  - i) \$60,000 for Pastor John / \$7,000 for Pastor Tim
  - ii) Moved by Beth to approve / Diane 2<sup>nd</sup> / discussion / motion carried
- c) St. Stephen's Foundation Update
- d) Payroll Protection Loan Update
  - i) Full loan amount has been forgiven.
- e) Living into a Culture of Mission & Action Committee – Long Term Planning with Pete Reuss
  - i) Sarah Ruff (chair), Pastors John and Tim, Jessica Gregory, Merrill Zieman, Mary Molumby & John Anderson
  - ii) 5-month journey begins March 22
- f) Coronavirus Response – Safety Committee – Merrill
  - i) Meeting Monday
  - ii) Base line / all people that participate in Sunday worship have the opportunity to have vaccine before opening
- g) Nominating Committee –Lynda Bergeson, Brenda Gieser and Abby Vavra, have been joined by Vicki Jackson, Andy Ruff and Jeff Kubat.
  - i) Motion to approve Vicki Jackson, Andy Ruff and Jeff Kubat.
  - ii) Debbie / Mary / discussion / motion carried

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

- a) Pastor Reports – pages 3-7
- b) Property & Maintenance – page 8
- c) Christian Education - page 8
- d) Youth & Family – no report
- e) Finance – page 8

- f) Stewardship – Kim
  - i) Working on updates for Spring giving/reminders/thank you
- g) Missions – Vickie
  - i) MN Food Share drive thru the last weekend in March. March 27 & 28 10:30-11:30
- h) Worship & Music
  - i) Great team work / planning continues
  - i) Inviting – no report
- j) Fellowship – Sara
  - i) Zoom coffee hour continues
- k) Nominating – Lynda Bergeson, Brenda Gieser and Abby Vavra are being joined by Vicki Jackson, Andy Ruff & Jeff Kubat!

**5) Important Dates**

Food, Palms & Crosses & Food Donation Drop-off @ Charlton Parking Lot – March 27 and 28, 10:30 am to 11:30 am

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

**6) Adjourn**

## Pastor John's Report

March 17, 2021

There are many things to be **grateful** for (every notice how that is always true?) and I'd like to make a partial list for St. Stephen's.

**TEAM WORK.** I am grateful for the cooperation, support, understanding, creativity and joy that marks so much of our mutual work as staff and volunteers. Those are the marks of the Christian community and I'm grateful they are marking ours!

**Living into a Culture of Mission and Action Committee.** That's a mouthful for a name but it sums up our hopes for the results of our long range planning committee. We will start our 5 month task Monday, March 22. I'm grateful for all who have said yes to this task: **Sara Ruff (chair) Pastor Tim, Jessica Gregory, Merrill Zieman, Mary Molumby, John Anderson, and me.** We'll get a more detailed look at the task on Monday but it will contain lots of options for input from the congregation and executable plans. Knowing Pete Ruess, our consultant, we will not be creating a plan which only sits on a shelf!

**Nominating Committee, Lynda Bergeson, Brenda Gieser and Abby Vavra,** may be joined by **Vicki Jackson, Andy Ruff and Jeff Kubat** (depending on council approval). Their work is always important and this year includes finding our next vice president.

**Communications and Media Coordinator hiring team** has been identified and will meet for the first time this Wednesday, March 17 from 4-5 p.m. Thank you to: **Gary Westman, Pastor Tim, Keith Gregory, Debbie Pirkl, Kim Richter, Jan Perkins and me.** We are embracing the evolving digital future that the pandemic has pushed us towards. Our goal will always be finding ways to connect to God, each other and the world, and the way we can do it is broadening. To that end thanks to **Norm Goetzke** for his leadership as we add two additional cameras to the sanctuary for better live streaming.

**Activities Coordinator of Children, Youth and Family Faith Formation hiring team** has been identified. We are grateful for **Merrill Zieman, Joy Stenhaus, Larry Longard, Tracy Westman, John Anderson, Abra Gillman and me** for saying yes to this work. We will also be adding youth to this committee and the interviewing process. Our first meeting time is the next order of business.

**The Foundation** is looking at new ways to best serve the mission of St. Stephen's. Having had a zoom meeting with a national consultant for the ELCA Endowment the next step is exploring a **gift policy** for the church. When a gift is given this would create protocols indicating percentages to be given to different ministries. It would help us celebrate the giving we've received and encourage consideration of St. Stephen's for individual legacy giving. We are looking at model gift policies. Thank you **Ron Nelson, Jane Johnson, Merrill Zieman, Kathy Caniff and me** for your work in this direction, and the **executive committee** who is now taking a look.

**Short Discussions to Foster Deeper Thoughts about Racism** has been very eye opening and included over 12 people each session. **Rachel Cagle** has done excellent work presenting material and creating an exploratory and non-shaming discussion culture. I'm encouraged by the Christian spiritual roots to this work. Christ leads

us into the deep end of life, for which we can also be grateful! If justice is what love looks like in public then we are called to be part of it.

**Salem and St. Stephen's.** We are going to have a meeting with congregation presidents, youth leaders and clergy to evaluate our three year effort of working together in Faith Formation for our youth. The question before us is how can working together enhance fulfilling our mission?

God is good! All the time!

Pastor John

## Council Update – March 2021

**Video Production** continues to take a significant part of my time. This will decrease somewhat when we finish the extra services of Lent and Holy Week. However, we are planning to resume **The Well** after Lent and devote some time to getting feedback on that service to guide a “refresh” of the format in May.

The **Racism Workshop** has been very well received with about 17 people involved along with our Facilitator Rachel Cagle. Pastor John and I are arranging a time to talk with Rachel to think about possible “**best next steps**” for this work at St. Stephen’s. We don’t want to lose the momentum of the conversations we’ve started, but at the same time we don’t want to get ahead of the visioning work that the congregation is just now embarking on. In addition, we need to be mindful of the different directions we might go with this: staff or lay led? Ad-hoc, or standing committee/team? A work group for those who are interested, or a leadership team to guide and call the whole congregation into engagement?

**Dr. Osterholm** gave an important presentation on **the COVID pandemic** at the Synod’s Tool Kit event recently. I have been pointing people to several of the topics he touched on through Facebook posts. Even while we are all feeling some relief and encouragement with the progress of the vaccines, he continues to warn us that we are in the “eye of the hurricane” and that the variants are very much a wild card at this point. We know that there are several and that they are spreading, but know very little about how well the current vaccines protect against them (as I understand it.) I encourage you to view the presentation which is about 30 minutes long (followed by Q&A) here: <https://vimeo.com/517637465>. You may also want to review specific sections from this outline. The section on Vaccine Nationalism is especially important, I feel.

00:00 Statistics Update on Virus

01:30 Timeline of the Virus within the US

04:20 New Variant Concerns

08:45 Vaccine Race

09:30 Health Workers Plead to the Public

**10:25 Vaccine Nationalism**

12:10 Summary of “How to Get Back to Normal”

18:00 What Faith Communities Need to Hear to Persevere During This Pandemic

24:40 Traveling During a Pandemic

27:40 Home-Bound Visits In Person

28:20 Recommendations about Opening Up the Churches and In Person Worship

31:40 What an Ideal Behavior of a Vaccinated Person Should Look Like

34:25 Children & Covid

38:20 Infection in Communities of Color

The **Hiring Team** for the Communications and Media Coordinator will have begun meeting before this Council meeting and I am excited to be on that team.

The **Visioning Team** is also about to start. Sara Ruff and I will be helping to coordinate the process under the direction of our consultant.

Lastly, I've noticed that there are several "larger topics" in the air for us as Church. **Racial Justice**, of course, but more recently the problem of **Christian Nationalism** and the underlying ambivalence and confusion around **Church/State boundaries**, politics, partisanship etc. I've been feeling drawn to preparing some **teaching sessions** on these topics for the congregation, and laying the groundwork for that with a refresher on **how we regard Scripture** in the first place, before we bring it into the conversation on such things. However, It seems like I'll need to hold off on that until some of the other "plates" stop "spinning." 😊

Below are the updated Facebook metrics.

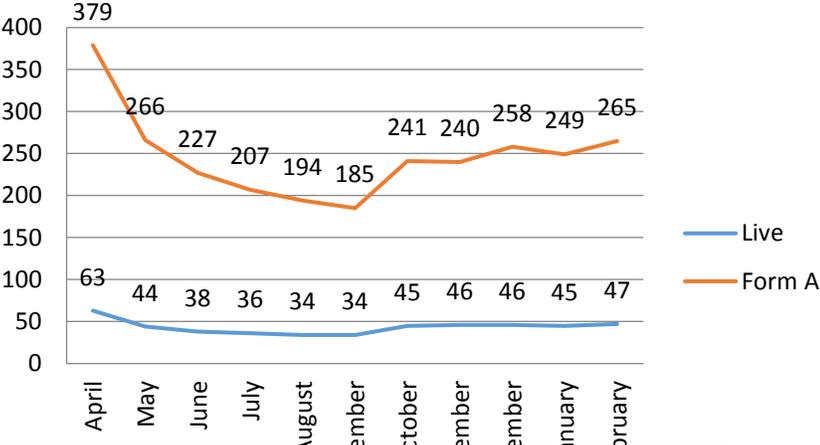
Blessings!

Pastor Tim

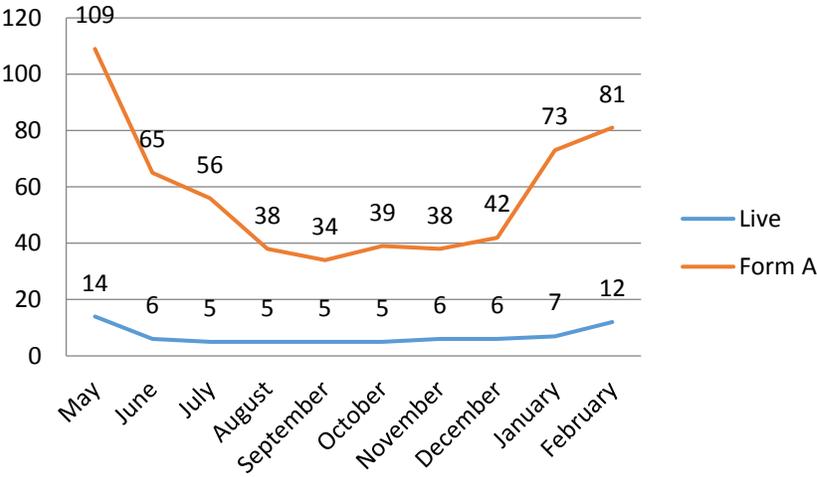
# Facebook Metrics through February 2021

NOTE: The "Form A" figure is the number that the ELCA has asked us to report for the online services in lieu of head-count attendance in worship. It is based on a formula that counts both live views as well as views in the first week after a service is live. However, I believe that the formula is double-counting the live viewers and thus providing an overestimate of the number of people actually viewing a service. Without getting into the details of the formula, I'd suggest that the "Average Weekly Sunday Attendance" for August is actually closer to 126 rather than the Form A number of 194. This does not include people attending the second, parking lot service.

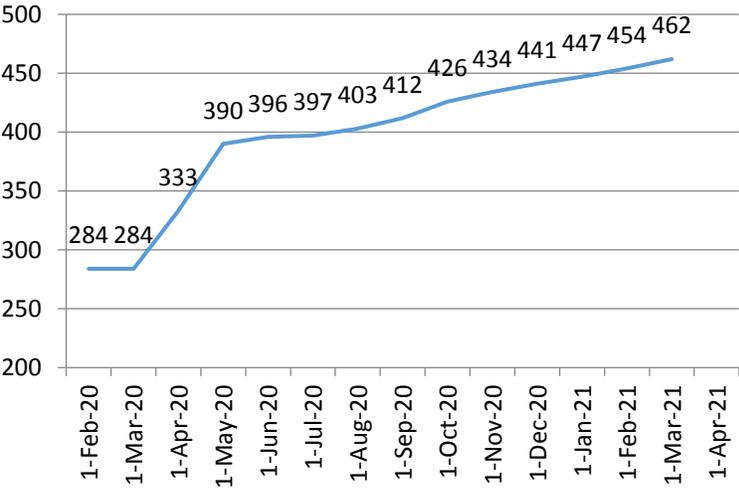
## Sunday Attendance



## The Well/Lent Attendance



## Facebook Followers



## **Property & Maintenance**

Hi all,

We again this month have just have been doing the small details on the "to do list". New faucets, MVMS requests/repairs, new clocks, new EXIT lights, fixing lock on wine cabinet etc..and we are still searching for a good home for the pallets (unless they have already been moved).

We were notified that Norm was running some new cables, but that was about it in terms of something hefty in the building.

Thank you, blessings to all.

Eric and Jessica

## **Christian Education**

Education committee notes:

- There are 3 kids that will be making their first communion on Maundy Thursday.
- On March 24th the faith formation classes will be doing something online for the Stations of the Cross.
- Our final faith formation class for the year is May 12th. Weather permitting it will be at church, outside on the grass and everyone will be masked and will be socially distancing.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Molumby

Tracy Westman

## **Finance**

The Finance committee met on Friday, March 12th at 7:00 pm. In attendance was Abra, Sue, Beth and Diane.

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

On a year-to-date basis, total income and total expense are both approximately \$4,000 and \$8,300 respectfully, below budget.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth and Diane

Finance Co-chairs