

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church
Parish Council Meeting January 20, 2021
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, Eric Donahue, Jessica Donahue, Kim Richter, Lori Ritt, John Anderson, Annette Youness, Tracy Westman, Ali Schloesser-Brecht, Mark Rogosheske, Vicki Jackson

AGENDA

1) Opening prayer / Devotional (Pastor John)

2) Minutes approved – November 18, 2020 meeting (Gary)

3) Updates from Executive Committee

- a) Annual Meeting – Proposed Budget & Plans for Meeting
 - i) Reviewed proposed budget for 2021
 - ii) Motion to approve proposed 2021 budget Diane. 2nd by Kim. Motion carried
 - iii) Will present during congregation meeting January 31, 2021 via zoom
- b) Committee Opening(s)
 - i) 2 members needed for nominating committee plus a member at large by end of February.
 - ii) Open position in Mission committee – Vicki will be chair at least until May.
- c) Coronavirus Response – Safety Committee – Merrill
 - i) There will be a report for the annual meeting.
 - ii) Livestream will return “in church” this Sunday.

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

- a) Pastor Reports – see pages 3-5
- b) Property & Maintenance – no report
- c) Christian Education – see page 6
- d) Youth & Family – no update. There are items in planning
- e) Finance – see page 7
- f) Stewardship – see page 8
- g) Missions – Thank you Vicki for taking chair position until May.
 - i) Received many coats to give to Garlough School
 - ii) 1200 lbs of food was donated to neighbors in December
 - iii) Loaves and Fishes need funding. Looking for ideas for pots/pans
 - iv) MN Food Share is in March

h) Worship & Music

i) During lent, would like to place a cross where the manger scene was during Christmas

j) Inviting – no report

k) Fellowship – no report

k) Nominating – reminder: we need 3 people

5) Important Dates

Congregation Annual Meeting – Sunday, January 31, 10:45 am

Next Council Meeting – Wednesday, February 17, 7:15 PM

6) Adjourn

Pastor John: January 2021 Report

One of the nice things about St. Stephen's is the fun it is to look back a month in the calendar, since our last council meeting, and be reminded of the faithful people who, together, have done so much! I am **grateful** for the significant ministry we share in. (There is more detail on these points in my annual report.)

Realizing there is so much beyond these few, I am **grateful** for:

1. Receiving **New Members!** How affirming it was to have people want to join us, what an act of faith in who we will return as, and how much fun to film them from their homes? It reaffirms that what unites us is so much more than a building.
2. **The Reverse Advent Calendar and Open House at the Manger** on Christmas Eve. A new expression of faith that resulted in ½ ton of food for Neighbors and outdoor fellowship options for the community.
3. Starting an introductory class of **Contemplative Prayer and Study**. Delighted with new participants and how deep this practice is. I've taught this introductory book twice before and have never gotten more out of it than this time. (It certainly isn't too late to explore deepening your prayer life in 2021!)
4. **Always Connected!** St. Stephen's hasn't offered such an intense stewardship effort in a very long time nor enjoyed such positive results. It gives me confidence to answer the question, "*How is church going?*" with "*Better than ever!*"
5. **Worship Planning**. It is great to have the worship leadership team zoom together on a Saturday morning and enjoy the synergy, shared understandings, creativity and planning from now through Easter!

A couple of observations:

1. I've enjoyed the "**worship from our homes**" for these past 3 weeks. It is such a clear statement that the "*church is not a building where people go to prayer.*" It furthers the blessing of seeing people reading the lessons from their homes. As we return to public worship in the sanctuary I hope we continue some of the creative elements we've learned during Covid.
2. Speaking of Covid, I'm grateful to be over my case. I'd say I'm 100%, 95% of the time. Strangely in this season of health issues for me it is now time to return for the second session of "photodynamic therapy" which requires me to return to my recliner, this time in a darkened room, through the weekend.
3. Any thoughts about **adding a garage** to our property? Perhaps at the end of the Wentworth lot?

Peace!

Pastor Tim: Report to Council – January 2021

Virtual Home Groups – The team continues to explore this and review content for a guide we'll provide to leaders. One of the resources we reviewed is an amazing set of animated videos from The Bible Project. I encourage you to visit their website and browse through their videos. The animations are absolutely wonderful! For a great example look at this **8-minute video on the creation story**: <https://youtu.be/afVN-7vYOKA>. I'm seriously looking at using these videos as the basis for some small group Bible Study conversations.

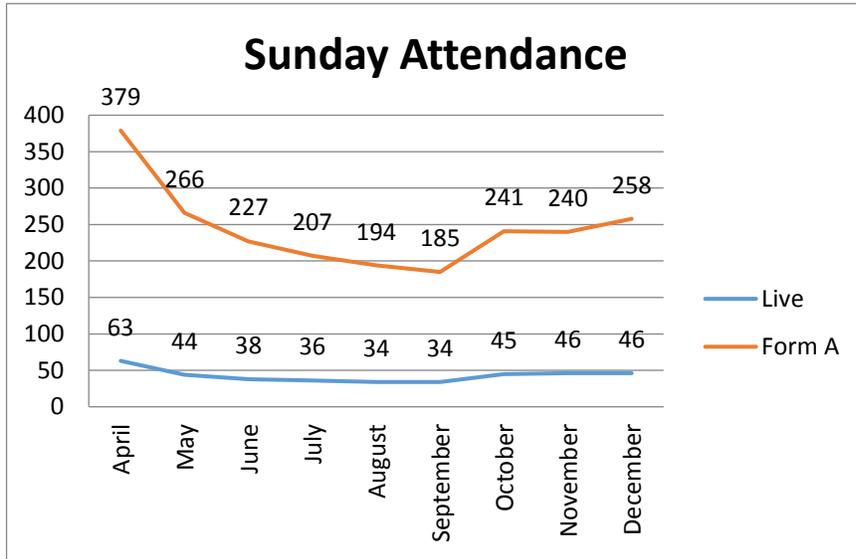
Homebound Ministry – I did some rethinking about this idea (helping homebound folks to connect with each other and the church via zoom) and realized that I was taking an "If you build it, they will come" approach. So before going any further, I'm going to spend some time keeping an ear to the ground to learn if this is something those folks might even be interested in.

Below are some updated metrics that I think I neglected to provide for you last month

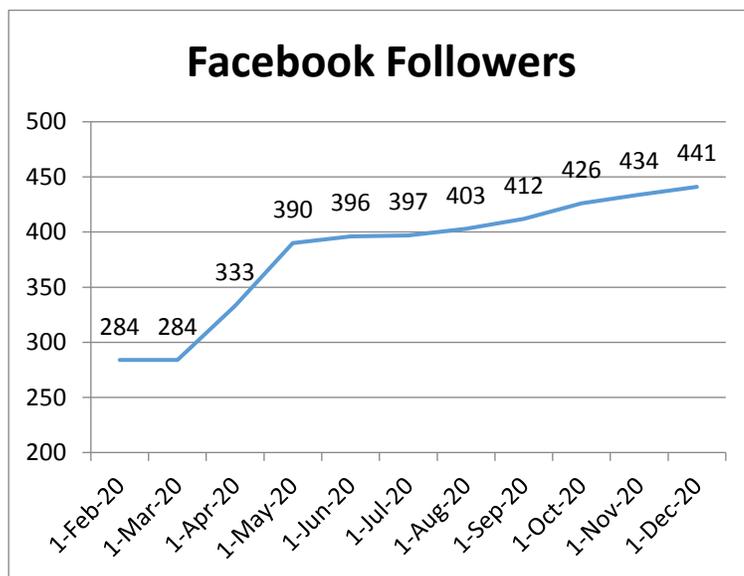
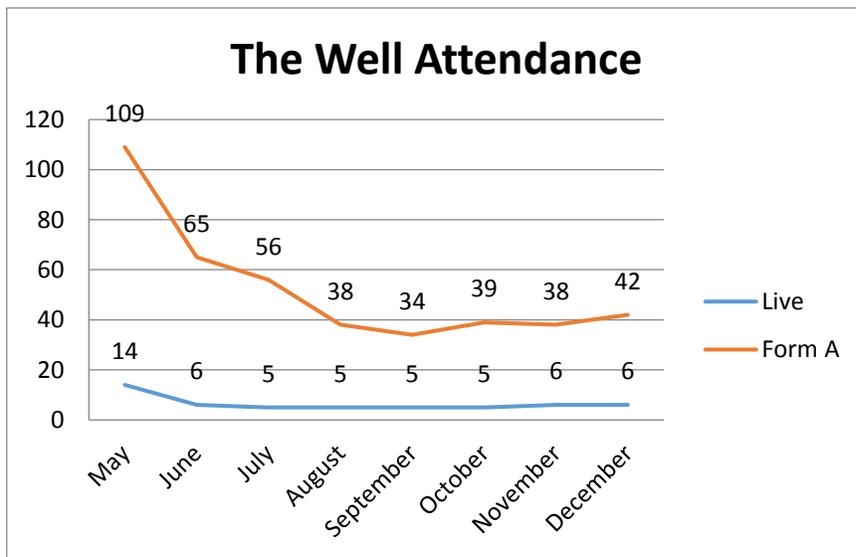
Blessings!

Pastor Tim

Facebook Metrics through December 2020



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.



Christian Education Notes for Jan.20, 2021
Mary Molumby

*The 8th graders will be doing visits to various places of worship. They will be going to a Muslim mosque, a Jewish synagogue and either a Buddhist temple or they will be having a conversation with an indigenous person about faith.

*Love in a Ziploc Bag has been changed due to the pandemic. It is now Love in a Note! Love in a Note is our way of sharing God's love and light in the world. We are asking our faith formation students to reach out to someone in their neighborhood, their church or school and send them a note. The note can be handwritten or they could color a picture that could be either delivered (following social distancing guidelines) or mailed. We are challenging the council to do the same, can you reach out to someone and spread God's love and light?

Finance:

In Gary's email for tonight's meeting it had 2 attachments. Both are for the Finance part of the annual meeting presentation. Attached in this email is a summary for YE 2020.

The 2020 YE deficit of \$28.1K is \$13.6 better than budget and \$20K better than 2019.

2020 general contributions were consistent with budget thanks to a strong final 2 weeks of the year. Other income fell short of budget driven by reduced Plate and Special Services offerings, rental income and Encore payment timing.

2020 expenses were favorable relative to budget driven by Salary & Benefits and Property & Maintenance.

The deficit of \$28.1K will be adjustment by \$28.1K from our Operating dedicated reserve balances.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth and Diane

	December YTD		
	BUDGET	ACTUAL	Change
General Envelope	390,000	388,672	(1,328)
Total Contributions	410,900	403,094	(7,806)
Total Other Income	55,300	39,757	(15,543)
Total Income	466,200	442,851	(23,349)
Total Expenses	507,904	471,000	36,904
Income Less Expense	(41,704)	(28,148)	13,556
NOTES:			
Expense Summary			
Gas Charges	19,000	15,747	3,253
Electricity	15,000	11,034	3,966
HVAC	14,000	14,050	(50)
Maintenance & repairs	12,500	6,161	6,339
Custodial Care	16,600	12,440	4,161
Other Prop/Maint	24,800	22,960	1,840
Total Prop/Maint	101,900	82,391	19,509
Salaries & Benefits	297,854	282,419	15,435
Other Expenses	108,150	106,190	1,960
Total	507,904	471,000	36,904

Stewardship committee: Kim Richter

The stewardship committee has much to celebrate this January. 2020 was a tough year overall among so many unknown factors in front of us. However the Stewardship Committee had begun the Stewardship for All Seasons program and really, it ended up being a great year to kick it off.

In November we launched our Always Connected intention drive. By the first part of December we had 75 intentions received. Our goal was 115. With both intentions and giving coming in low still, we implemented a two-fold push to help out this scenario.

We began a phone calling tree to Members to encourage the submission of their intention. A \$20,000 challenge gift was at stake and we truly wanted to make our goals that we could be on a good footing for 2021. We sent thank you notes and magnets to everyone who completed an intention. Making those calls proved to be a great way to connect with so many members - was a gift in itself.

We then sent a letter encouraging pledge fulfillment end of the year gifts and reminding people of tax benefits through charitable giving.

The efforts paid off, as we happily watched those last intentions come in (indeed we have actually gone over 120 now). Such enthusiasm around this campaign is really quite inspirational. And we had a great December influx of much needed gifts.

In summary, we were overjoyed that we had success behind this campaign as it was an investment on the front end and had plenty of requirements and milestones for us. But really we all learned a ton through this and enjoyed it all, finding inspiration, reinforcement of our faith, and just a simple desire to forge ahead and make great things happen for Saint Stephen's.

We did it. Together we all did it. Because why? Because we're Always Connected.

We are beginning the stages of planning for SAS 2021. The program is leading us into new initiatives and renewed encouragement for us and for our members. The work isn't done and we have plenty to do.

Thanks so much to you all for your support!