

Bethlehem Lutheran Church Council Minutes
December 21st, 2023
6:30 pm

“God’s family working together to welcome all.”

Present: Kerry Melby, Geoff Gilbert, Kory Anderson, Jaimie Rudolph, Lisa Cook, Brian Connor, Mark Teslik, Pr. Jaime
Absent: Braxton Druckrey, Tina Thomas (resigned)

Council Terms:

Geoff: 1st: 2020-2023; 2nd: 2023-2026
Kory: 1st: 2020-2023; 2nd: 2023-2026
Kerry: 1st: 2021-2024; 2nd: 2024-2027
Tina: 1st: 2022-2025
Jaimie: 1st: 2022-2025
Lisa: 1st: 2022-2025
Brian: 1st: 2023 – 2026
Mark: 1st: 2023-2026
Braxton Druckrey – Youth Representative

Dwelling in the Word - Kerry

Call to Order

- Kerry Melby at 6:30 p.m.

Prayer

Approval of the Agenda

- Add Council Vacancy
- Motion made to approve by Geoff Gilbert, second by Kory Anderson, motion carried

Approval of Last Month’s Minutes

- Motion made by Jaimie Rudolph, second by Mark Teslik, motion carried.

Pastor Report

Committee Reports

- Brief discussion on connection to community through giving and serving and organizations that received donations when Finance group reviewed budget for year end. Pastor Jaime and Janice Petersen assisted with local organization breakdowns.

Approval of Committee Reports

- Motion by Lisa Cook, second by Kory Anderson, motion carried.

Budget Approval

- Jerry Saalsaa, Church Treasurer, joined the meeting to review proposed 2024 budget. Motion made by Jaimie Rudolph to accept the 2024 proposed budget and take to the annual congregational meeting, second by Kerry Melby, motion carried.

Old Business

Property Lines

- Kory shared map of church property with the property line marked. There is now a marker on the property and the fire signs are correct. Kory will talk with Del, and they will talk with the neighbor about the strip that has the trees/grass that we have maintained, but that are actually on the neighbor’s property and see if we can continue. The neighbor has requested that we don’t tie anything to their fire number/sign when we have banners/events at church.

Property Improvement/Update Plan

- Kory shared a Proposed Property Improvement Plan that itemizes building and ground maintenance items at church by need and into two groups: lower costs and higher costs. This will be included in the Property Report for the Annual Report. The Property Committee is still discussing next steps and completing additional work on bids to help with budget.

Strategic Planning Next Steps

- Plan will be included in the Annual Report as this was a large part of 2023 work and accomplishment and will carry us into the next few years.
- As people lead events at church, would like them to document what they used/who they reached out to so another volunteer could step forward and use their plan document to lead that event. One example is the Pie Fundraiser that Kerry/Jeff Melby did and the list they created with supplies and contacts so another person can use that in the future.

Live Stream Training

- Jeff Melby trained one more volunteer and Kerry has two other high school kids she's trying to coordinate schedules and training for as well. Please ask others if you think they could learn it and would be willing to sign up.

New Business

Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA)

- FCA representative reached out asking for monetary support and some advertising of their organization. Pastor Jaime reviewed their organizational beliefs and they do not align with the ELCA beliefs, therefore per previous discussion/decision, we will not donate money nor advertise their events.

Mallards Game Outing

- Kerry Melby and Lisa Cook will look into an outing this coming summer for church and/or community members and see if a Thrivent grant could go toward the cost.

Discussion of staff working remotely

- Janice Petersen asked about working remotely for three months from TX. She does a lot of her work remotely but would be unable to do in-person visits while she is away. Mark Teslik volunteered to assist with in-person visits when he is able. Jaimie Rudolph made a motion to approve the temporary remote work request for Janice Petersen. Second by Mark Teslik and the motion carried.

Lead Conference Feb. 17 9:30 am – 3:30 pm at St. John's in Sauk

- Mark Teslik will check his calendar and would like to attend. If anyone else is interested let Pastor Jaime know so we can coordinate payment and carpool.

Annual meeting Jan. 28-reports due Jan. 8—Get your reports to the office.

Synod Assembly Reps (May 18)—

- Will share out at annual meeting and then we need to vote and approve the attendees at the meeting per our church constitution.

Rooted Good Program

- Program that helps equip churches with ways to generate income and imagine other ways to develop their building, land, ministry for the good of the world. How do we generate income? Ideas for use of building? <https://www.rootedgood.org/>

Treasurer

- Jerry Saalsaa has advised that he cannot commit the time to continue as church treasurer. He will assist through the Annual Meeting. Please consider those you know in the congregation that may have a financial background and could potentially take on this role. Janice Petersen does a lot of the day-to-day work, but the primary responsibilities

will be the annual audit, budget, and being available for financial questions that surface throughout the year.

Council Vacancy (add)

- Tina's spot is a one-year vacancy. Pastor Jaime emailed the nominating committee to ask that they seek out a replacement.

Adjourn

- Motion made by Lisa Cook to adjourn at 8:25 p.m., second by Geoff Gilbert, motion carried.

Lord's Prayer

Pastor's Report

Here is an overview of where I have spent my time this month:

In the realm of worship this month we had our Thanksgiving Eve service and Gifts of Bethlehem concert which opened up our Advent season. A big thank you to all who were involved in the concert, it was a wonderful witness to the variety of gifts and talents in this community. I also want to thank Tania for her organization of the event and to the Sunday School volunteers for coordinating their program. Also, a big thanks goes to Tina and Janice for taking care of the silent auction, there are many hours that go into keeping it updated and running smoothly. This week we also have our Blue Christmas service on Wednesday and two services on Christmas Eve.

On the pastoral care side of things, I met with 3 different people this month with one of those visits being at the hospital. I also made numerous phone calls this month as well to check in on members, especially those with ongoing concerns. I officiated the funeral and graveside service for Phyllis Bernicke who passed away earlier this month. Additionally, I officiated a graveside service for a nonmember this month as well.

This past Sunday I joined our group of carolers to deliver goodies and sing carols to various assisted living facilities and some of our shut ins. We had 10 carolers in total with two new nonmembers who joined us as well. Confirmation prepared the goodies that were delivered as a service project earlier this month and they went bell ringing last week for the Salvation Army at Walmart and Festival Foods. Confirmation will be on break until the new year. Tania and I are discussing changing the frequency and structure of confirmation at this time because we are both feeling burned out with how things are going right now. We will discuss and share plans once we have them finalized.

This past month I met with Jayden Sprague who is the area coordinator for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). I have added FCA to our agenda to discuss this week for a couple of reasons. Firstly, Jayden was interested in meeting because she is looking for support for starting more FCA groups in schools in the area. She was primarily looking for financial assistance. After talking with Jayden and conducting my own research on FCA, their beliefs do not align with the ELCA, and this concerns me. Additionally, Megan has been leading a high school group that meets every Wednesday before school as the coach/group leader for FCA in Portage. Many of the older high school students that are connected with the mission trip have been attending these meetings regularly, along with other students not affiliated with Bethlehem. I would like us to discuss how we will proceed in the future with FCA.

Some meetings I attended this month include my colleague group, finance, weekly text study, and stewardship. Additionally, I led the personnel committee and staff meetings. This month has also been filled with a lot of additional office tasks with Tina's recent vacancy. I have been very grateful for Janice during this transition as we try to figure out day-to-day questions and issues as they arise. Also, Julie has been helping with printing and communications, which is a big relief. I have organized the posting of the job, managed office volunteer coverage, and monitored applications as they have come in the last three weeks. We have had a great response to the job with multiple qualified applicants, which is very exciting! We will look at setting up interviews for the first week of January.

Blessings,
Pastor Jaime Benson

Committee Reports

Finance

Met December 4, 2023

- 1) Financial Update
 - a) Total income was close to what we expected, and expenses were in line with last year.
 - b) Total net year profit as of Nov 2023 was \$13452.
 - c) The rest of the financial update was discussed in conjunction with 2024 budget discussion.

- 2) 2024 Budget
 - a) Jerry S. reviewed the 2024 BLC budget in detail with the committee. Changes, corrections, and discussions were made as we went through the budget.
 - b) Specific budget requests/notes:
 - i) Property requests for budget include electric hand dryers, LED lighting project. No air handler replacement at this time but will need in future or if breaks.
 - ii) Sunday School may need a new curriculum.
 - iii) Technology: general thoughts that upgrades are needed for the sanctuary computer, sound system in fellowship hall, and some office computers are older and slow—may need repair or replacement.
 - c) Jerry S. made a motion to set aside \$10,000 for the designated lighting project from savings/checking into building account. Motion seconded by John D. Motion carried.
 - d) Jerry made a motion to send the proposed budget to council for approval. Seconded by Don. Motion carried.

- 3) Benevolence
 - a) Discussion during budget review of what we should pay out this year and plan for next year.
 - b) Decision for this year is to pay:
 - i) \$900 more to the synod for a total of \$1500 this year
 - ii) Pay rest of world hunger donations to Synod; \$600 (this money has been already given to the church)
 - iii) \$1900 to local community benevolence, exact breakdown of how much to each organization will be determined by Pr Jaime and Janice.
 - c) 2024 budget has \$1000 for Community Concerns benevolence to keep in line with strategic plan.
 - d) Motion made by John D to accept this benevolence payment proposal, seconded by Janice P. Motion carried.

- 4) Building Fund Fundraiser
 - a) Discussion on the building fund and raising money for the building fund for future repairs/improvements.
 - b) The Property Committee is coming up with a long-term plan for what repairs and upgrades are needed in the coming years. This information is going to be presented at the annual meeting.
 - c) Based on this plan an organized group of church members could brainstorm ideas and oversee this fundraising process.

- 5) Financial Self-Assessment
 - a) Resourceful Servant is a tool of the ELCA for congregations to look at their financial habits/status. The finance committee has briefly looked at this in the past and would like to do it. Deferred review of it at this meeting.

Submitted by Jaimie Rudolph

Property

Nov 4 –Dec 13

Nov 6----- Went thru all RTU's, with Dennis Benson, turn the Music Room Unit on for heating, and changed filters on the office unit. All units were operating as they should.

Nov 24-----Setup snowblowers for snow removal, checked oil, filled with gas and started both blowers.

Nov 26-----Removed snow from sidewalks and church entrances and salted. (Janitor was on vacation)

Nov 30-----Prep for delivery of Christmas Tree on Dec 1 and repaired top latch on door to Fellowship Hall that had been ripped from the door anchors. I only fixed it temporarily due to lack of time, will do final repair after the holidays.

Dec 1-----Went to Silent Night Christmas tree farm West of Endeavor with Geoff Gilbert to pick out a tree. (Nancy Schwanke again donated our tree for this year.) Geoff and I returned to church and with the help of Steve Mc Neil, Jeff Melby, and Brad Cook we raised the tree and put on the lights.

Dec 3-----Removed snow from sidewalks and entrances with the help of Kory Anderson who also salted the walks. (Janitor was on an emergency trip to Florida)

Note: New snowplow contractor has done a very nice job to date.

Submitted by Del Molden

Stewardship

Our last meeting started with a recap of our November gratitude focus and the feedback was positive. Brian is taking all of the leaves and will be working on a collage or wall hanging of some sort to display them. We estimate about 50 thank you cards were taken and hopefully sent!

We don't have much bandwidth for anything new in December, with all of the holiday stuff already on the schedule, but our next focus will be tackling the volunteerism / church duties / engagement issues, which are all kind of tangled together. We'd like to try to put something together for the Annual Meeting to introduce a new "strategy" for moving away from committees and towards the idea of groups / clubs based on shared interests / talents / affinities. The thought is gathering folks together in a way to offer both fellowship and opportunities to serve may be more effective than just saying, "We need volunteers to take charge of...."

The main example discussed last month was a Garden Club, which could tackle projects like the prayer garden, but could also create events and activities for fellowship and welcoming the community, such as trips to visit local attractions. If we can get a group started, we might generate more interest than asking for one or two people to take over a chore that needs to be done.

We will meet on Monday, January 15, at 7pm, for our next meeting and will prepare a way to introduce this at the annual meeting, which is scheduled for January 28. Then, we can use February to highlight these groups, find ways to encourage people to see what might spark their interest, and get organized, in general...then maybe pull it all together with a "Participation pledge" card or event????

Separately, Council will have some discussion around aligning the needs of our community with the ministries (current and future) of BLC. Where / how should we be serving to make the most impact?

In the meantime, our task would be to brainstorm ideas for those focus areas or groupings of activities / interests. And maybe a few people who might be good matches to help kick off those groups. Feel free to start some email conversations prior to our next meeting!

Submitted by Lisa Cook

Worship & Music

No report submitted.