

**Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 17, 2020 – 6:30 pm in Fellowship Hall**

Call to Order: Linda Reed **Time:** 6:35 pm

Opening Prayer: Pastor Schmitt led council in prayer.

Roll Call & Action on Absentees: Present at the meeting were Christina Andrae, Meri Beth Elder, Rick Neish, Karen Mowry, Zach Arbore, Jodi Kronenwetter, Linda Reed, Mark Jones, Jason Sheppard, Kennette Grohal and Pastor Schmitt. Kathe Houck, Barbara Artuso and Lucinda Nicely were also in attendance. **Motion** to accept Mary Ann Coulston and John McManamy as excused: Zach Arbore. Second: Kennette Grohal. Motion carried.

Adoption of Agenda: A revised agenda was passed out prior to the meeting which included the revisions of adding the November 8th Council Meeting under Consideration of Minutes, adding the ELCA Daily Bread Matching Grant under Ministry Reports, adding Boy Scouts of America under Executive Committee. Additionally, the motion to adopt the 2021 budget was moved to the Treasurer's Report, a motion was added under Motions to change the Constitution relating to Congregation Council terms, and a motion was added under Motions to rescind previous Congregation actions in regards to spending authority of the Pastor Discretionary Fund, and a motion was added under Motions to officially accept the nominations from the Nominating Committee of candidates running for Council. **Motion** to adopt agenda as presented with the changes noted above: Zach Arbore. Second: Jason Sheppard. Motion carried.

Consideration of Council Minutes: **Motion** to approve the minutes from the October 20, 2020 council meeting as presented: Zach Arbore. Second: Christina Andrae. Motion carried.

Motion to approve the minutes from the November 8, 2020 council meeting with a correction that the third motion relating to worship at the meeting came from Council and not the Worship & Music Committee: Zach Arbore. Second: Kennette Grohal. Motion carried.

Communications: No communications were received.

Treasurer's Report: Rick Neish gave an oral summary of the previously distributed Treasurer's Report for October 2020: Cash flow for the month was positive (\$1,718). The reduction in income was matched by a reduction in expense. Year-to-date cash flow remains positive (\$4,282), largely due to expense reductions. The year-to-date budget indicates the cash flow was targeted to be about \$43,000 at this point in time, which is about a \$40,000 variance compared to year-to-date actual cash flow. The main contributor to this variance is the \$72,000 variance between budget and actual Unified Giving, of which \$40,000 directly relates to a loss in Trinity membership. Currently, about \$156,000 of endowments have been used this year so far and is propping up the positive cash flow. About \$250,000 of endowments have been used this year when operation support (\$156,000), PPP Loan (\$75,000), and TLC House repairs (\$19,000) are considered together. \$48,000 was budgeted year-to-date for Committee, but only \$23,000 has been spent. Year-to-date Trinity is about \$12,000 below budget related to Utilities due to winters being mild. The TLC Renovation Fund dedicated account has still been bringing in about only two thirds of what's going out (loan payment). While this is not an immediate concern, this will eventually drain the balance in the account. **Motion** to accept the Treasurer's Report: Zach Arbore. Second: Jason Sheppard. Motion carried.

Rick Neish reported to Council the most recent version of the proposed 2021 budget. The proposed 2021 budget has a \$56,000 deficit. The two options the Finance Committee is proposing is 1) approve the budget as is with the deficit, which will further eat away at endowment principal or 2) reduce budget expenses further. The Finance Committee does not recommend option 1 (adopting the proposed budget as is).

The Finance Committee noted lack of access to a strategic plan as well as the current path being unsustainable. When the Health & Wellness Ministry was adopted, part of the recommended funding solution was looking for grants, none of which happened. Unified Giving is projected at \$360,000 and Miscellaneous Receipts were tweaked slightly (\$3,500). There are no significant changes in funding from the previous version, which nets to a \$56,000 deficit. Mission Support is targeted to be 15% of Unified Giving. At the Finance Committee meeting, it was proposed taking \$40,000 and splitting it evenly amongst the Committee budgets. Rick asked for a little leeway in allocating the \$40,000 overall Committee budget, which is in the current presented version.

Rick Neish stated no checks can be signed after January 1st if a budget isn't adopted by the Council and the Congregation. Kennette Grohal asked if Trinity has anyone that could be a Grant Writer. Rick responded that the Finance Committee discussed talking with member P.J. Patterson who may have some experience.

Zach Arbore **motioned** to reduce the proposed 2021 budget Mission Support by \$20,000. Second: Jason Sheppard. Andrae, Elder, Arbore, Kronenwetter, Sheppard, and Grohal voted in favor. Mowry, Jones and Schmitt voted against. Motion carried.

Lucinda Nicely spoke on the behalf of the Personnel Committee noting her opinion that staff should not be reduced, however that the committee was open to removing staff raises, Christmas gifts, and office celebrations from the 2021 proposed budget in light of the deficit. Zach Arbore **motioned** to remove raises for staff from the proposed 2021 budget, which is approximately \$5,000. Second: Christina Andrae. Motion carried.

Zach Arbore **motioned** to remove Christmas gifts and staff office celebrations, which is approximately \$1,000, from the proposed 2021 budget. Second: Christina Andrae. Motion carried.

Zach Arbore **motioned** to combine the proposed 2021 Committee budgets to one line item. Individual Committees need to submit individual budgets to Council at a later date. Second: Kennette Grohal. Elder, Mowry, Arbore, Kronenwetter, Jones, Grohal, and Schmitt voted in favor. Sheppard voted against. Andrae abstained. Motion carried.

Zach Arbore **motioned** to adopt the proposed 2021 budget with the previously adopted changes and send to the Congregation for changes and approval. Second: Meri Beth Elder. Motion carried.

Ministry Report: Pastor Schmitt updated Council that Congregation response to the ELCA Daily Bread Matching Grant has been inspiring. The match amount has been met by the Congregation and Trinity will receive the ELCA match amount.

Pastor Schmitt informed Council that a letter has been received by Bishop Kusserow from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod strongly recommending Congregations to suspend worship and in-person meetings for four weeks. A copy of the letter was distributed to Council.

There was concern expressed members leaving Trinity if Council closed the church. Karen Mowry stated she feels the safest at Trinity when compared to other places. Pastor Schmitt **motioned** to accept the Bishop's recommendation to suspend worship and in-person meetings beginning November 23, 2020 through December 20, 2020. Second: Zach Arbore. Motion carried.

Executive Committee: The Executive Committee **motions** to hold the November and December congregational meeting by mail-in ballot following the synodical and constitutional guidelines. Motion carried.

The Executive Committee **motions** to approve the list of voting members.

Pastor commented that the list was sourced directly from Church Windows and includes 569 people. Motion carried.

Pastor Schmitt communicated that recently a deadline went by to file a claim related to the BSA bankruptcy. Pastor reached out to the Synod for advice and what was recommended was if Trinity knew of a complaint of abuse, then it would be appropriate to file a claim.

Motions: The Constitution & By-Laws and Finance Committees **move** the following change to our Constitution to the Congregation: C12.05 c: The Congregation Council may enter into contracts of up to no more than ~~\$20,000~~ \$40,000 for items not included in the budget.

It was commented that this figure has never been inflation adjusted and needs approved by the Congregation twice. Motion carried.

The Constitution & By-Laws Committee, with a recommendation from the Finance Committee, **moves** to make the following change to our Constitution to the Congregation: C12.02: The term of office for adult (defined as having obtained 18 years of age or legally emancipated at the time of their election) members shall be for three years or until their successors are elected by this congregation, with the term of office beginning at the next scheduled meeting of the Congregation Council. Their tenure shall be so arranged that one-third of the terms expire annually. Adult members shall be eligible to serve ~~no more than one~~ no more than two (2) full terms plus the remaining year of a previously vacated position to which they were initially elected as a successor member (C12.03.) of the Congregation Council, unless one year has elapsed before reelection.

Linda Reed commented likewise this motion would need voted on by the Congregation twice to be adopted. Motion carried.

Christina Andrae **moves** to accept the nominations of the candidates David Gebhart, Herb Harris, David Smeltzer, Richard Neish, Ralph Neiman III, and Donna Jeffrey from the Nominating Committee to run for seats on Council. Second: Zach Arbore. Motion carried.

Zach Arbore **moves** to rescind the previous vote of Council which required two signatures to request from the Pastor Discretionary Fund and revert to what was previously required. Second: Christina Andrae. Motion carried.

Return to Worship: No report.

Unfinished Business: A question was asked about the plan for distributing the budget to the Congregation. Pastor Schmitt agreed of the importance and said it was possible to be posted online to the website and a link could be shared to the Facebook page.

New Business: Pastor Schmitt read a letter from John McManamy communicating his resignation from Council. Zach Arbore **motioned** to regretfully accept John McManamy's resignation from Council. Second: Meri Beth Elder. Motion carried.

Motion to Adjourn: Zach Arbore. Second: Kennette Grohal. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned.

Next meeting: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 – 6:30 p.m.

**Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes
Friday, December 4, 2020 – Email**

A special council meeting was initiated by Linda Reed, President, through email at December 4, 2020 at 7:30 pm. The business of the meeting was to discuss and vote on motions brought by the Finance Committee related to renovations at the TLC House (below). Votes were to be received by the group by December 6, 2020 at 6:00 pm.

Motion from the Finance Committee to approve a bid from JBL Construction to replace 11 interior doors and replace baseboard (wood additional) throughout the TLC House at a cost of \$6,175.00. Ten voted in favor. Motion carried.

Motion from the Finance Committee to approve a bid from JBL Construction to replace all drywall, wiring and plumbing in the kitchen of the TLC House at a cost of \$13,750.00. Ten voted in favor. Motion carried.

The meeting concluded following the vote on the motion.

Minutes for Stewardship Meeting 12/1/2020 (via zoom)

Members: Zachary Arbore, Ted Massa, Barbara Artuso, Candace Bungard, Linda Foster, David Rock, and Pastor Paula Schmitt

Devotions: were presented by Zach Arbore. Devotions for the January meeting will be given by Barbara

Council report: was given by Zach Arbore. Zach noted that much of the discussion at council centered around budget finalizations. Zach also spoke about the suspension of in-person worship for the time being for at least 4 weeks.

Renovation report: (Reported on April, July, October and January). Tabled for review next month. During next month's review purposed discussion on year 2020 trend for this fund

Old Business:

- a. **Year long Stewardship campaign:** Discussion continued from last month on the year long stewardship campaign. Several ideas were again discussed surrounding the interviewing of those individuals who are passionate about ministries in the congregation. The feeling among the committee members continues to be that giving to causes or a specific ministry is the best approach. It was decided that a video series will be created for these interviews. The videos that are created will be posted on the church's Facebook, Youtube and internet pages. These video interviews will be followed up by a synopsis insert to be placed in the church bulletin. A list of questions were synthesised that centered around highlighting the specific ministry, stimulating volunteerism to that ministry, and encouraging congregational giving. A list of targeted ministries were made up to begin this program. Zach volunteered to conduct the interviews and edit the videos. The committee will target the Christmas Basket and Visitation ministries to pilot this program. Zach will update the committee throughout the process and will reach out for help to make the bulletin inserts once the first interview videos have been conducted.
- b. **Phone appeal with Carol:** Ted Massa noted that it is common for Carol McIntyre to make a phone appeal to members of the congregation who have not sent in their commitment cards as of the end of the return window. Ted stated that he spoke with Carol regarding this prior to the meeting and that this was on going for this year. It was noted that giving is projected to be down in the coming year. The committee discussed this issue and possible reasons including the pandemic, loss in membership etc. Ted suggested a "thank you" letter be drafted

to the congregation to thank those that have returned their cards and to serve as a point of contact with those that may not have sent in their commitment cards yet. Ted volunteered to create this letter and send it to the committee for review. Once reviewed, the letter will be distributed to the congregation either via mail or as a part of the Triangle for January. The committee resolved to continue their work in trying to find a way to stimulate the congregation to give of their time, talents and treasures.

New Business

- a. **Committee resignations and retirement:** Zach reported that there are two committee retirements and resignations that have taken place since the last meeting: Carol Marcy and David Rock. The committee thanks David and Carol for their work on this committee over the years. Both members will be missed.

Next meeting scheduled for week of January 5th, 2021 at 6:30pm via Zoom

Worship and Music Committee

The Worship & Music Committee did not meet in November 2020.

Kathe Houck
Interim Chair



**SOUTHWESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA
SYNOD** EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH IN AMERICA

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Office of the Bishop

December 8, 2020

Dear Synod Leaders,

The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus be with you all.

Three weeks ago I wrote to you with my strong encouragement to suspend all in-person gatherings in our ministry sites, including worship, because of the surge in new COVID-19 cases across our region. Today I am writing again to ask that you continue this practice through Christmas and into the new year until we see that the distribution of effective vaccines or other measures of restraint bring the daily new cases back down to a sustainable level.

The Church's witness to Christ consistently speaks of his self-giving love. "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many," Jesus says of himself in Matthew's Gospel (20:28). The creed confesses that "for us and for our salvation he came down from heaven." The ancient hymn that St. Paul quoted in his letter of encouragement to the Philippians (2:6-11) sings of Jesus' act of self-emptying for the salvation of the world. Martin Luther's glorious Christmas hymn, *From Heaven Above*, expands on this same theme through 14 verses. Verse eight asks this pressing question:

Welcome to earth, O noble Guest,
through whom this sinful world is blest!
You turned not from our needs away;
how can our thanks such love repay?

This year, gathering for Christmas worship remotely may do just that.

If your ministry site provides opportunities for remote worship, please follow this link <https://www.swpasynod.org/synodnews/christmas2020> and share your online resources so that other ministry sites that do not have their own online ministry may be able to bless their people through the gifts you have provided. The love of Jesus invites us into his own pattern of self-giving love, by which the whole world is blessed. Thank you for living in the love of Jesus for the sake of others this year!

With you in Christ,

+ Kurt F. Kusserow, Bishop