

**Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, December 22, 2020 – 6:30 pm via Zoom Web Conferencing**

**Call to Order:** Linda Reed      **Time:** 6:38 pm

**Opening Prayer:** Pastor Schmitt led council in prayer.

**Roll Call & Action on Absentees:** Present at the meeting were Meri Beth Elder, Karen Mowry, Zach Arbore, Jodi Kronenwetter, Mark Jones, Kennette Grohal, Pastor Schmitt, Kathe Houck, Dana Shannon, Herb Harris, Amanda Cole, and Donna Jeffery. Linda Reed, Jason Sheppard and Christine Weller were also in attendance. **Motion** to accept Mike Macey as excused: Zach Arbore. Second: Kennette Grohal. Motion carried.

**Adoption of Agenda:** Linda Reed called for the following changes to the agenda: Add discussion of a motion regarding check signing after the Treasurer's Report, add discussion of the sound system under the Ministry Report, and add Election of Officers after New Business. **Motion** to adopt agenda as presented with the changes noted above: Zach Arbore. Second: Herb Harris. Motion carried.

**Installation of New Council Members:** Linda Reed read a letter from Christina Andrae announcing her resignation from Council. Zach Arbore **moved** to accept the resignation from Christina Andrae with regret. Second: Kennette Grohal. Motion carried.

Linda Reed explained that Amanda Cole was the next highest receiver of votes and would fill Christina Andrae's term. Under normal circumstances, installation of council members is done in front of the Congregation. Pastor Schmitt proceeded to install Kathe Houck, Dana Shannon, Herb Harris, Amanda Cole, Mike Macey and Donna Jeffery to council.

**Consideration of Council Minutes:** **Motion** to approve the minutes from the November 17, 2020 council meeting as presented. A question from Kathe Houck related to the motion changing CR 12.05.D20 and Continuing Resolutions was voiced. Linda Reed commented to follow up with Jack Wright with the Constitution and Bylaws Committee. Motion made by Zach Arbore. Second: Mark Jones. Motion carried.

**Motion** to approve the minutes from the December 4th, 2020 council meeting as presented. Zach Arbore. Second: Kennette Grohal. Motion carried.

**Communications:** A letter from Bishop Kusserow from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA was reviewed by council and summarized by Pastor Schmitt. Pastor Schmitt commented the letter does not recommend a specific date for in-person worship to resume, only commenting about "Christmas and into the new year."

Pastor Schmitt **motioned** to evaluate in-person worship at the normal January council meeting and that the Return to Worship Committee meet during the first full week in January.

Mike Macey asked can congregations vote against the recommendations of the Bishop. Pastor Schmitt responded that because of how the ELCA is structured, congregations can make their own decisions and that the recommendation from the Bishop is a recommendation. Mike Macey also asked if it was possible to put out a survey to the congregation to get their feelings. Mike Macey also commented that it was his belief that masking and social distancing were an effective mitigation effort to allow for in-person activities. Mike Macey also commented about his

belief that the congregation is in the dark and the congregation doubts council's will to do in-person worship.

Linda Reed commented that there has been a Return to Worship committee consisting of many different backgrounds that was meeting weekly with the goal of keeping as many people as safe as possible. In addition, there have been many special mailings going out to the congregation explaining the actions of council. Mike Macey asked if this information has been on Trinity's Facebook. Linda Reed responded yes they have.

Zach Arbore commented that there was a spike of cases around Thanksgiving and it's his belief that there will likely be a spike around Christmas. Mike Macey commented that he didn't see much spread coming from Trinity and that members being force to attend online are becoming upset.

Linda Reed called for a vote to the motion. Elder, Mowry, Arbore, Kronenwetter, Jones, Grohal, Schmitt, Houck, Shannon, Harris, Cole, and Jeffery voted in favor. Macey voted against. Motion carried.

**Treasurer's Report:** Due to Rick Neish not being present at the meeting, Linda Reed asked council to further review the narrative provided and any questions would try to be answered that evening but otherwise could reach out to Rick Neish directly. Dana Shannon asked what the WELCA fund represented. Linda Reed explained it was a separate fund for the Women's Group (Women of the ELCA) and their activities. Mark Jones commented to the new council members that in the more recent years the endowed funds have been used to make up for the operating deficits and that it was his understanding this could continue to occur for about 3 to 4 years before those funds were exhausted. Mark Jones commented on the recent challenges of council on keeping the church running without exhausting the endowed funds. Mike Macey asked did the lack of the Car Hop this year contribute to the reduced operating capacity. Linda Reed responded that the Car Hop funds do not support normal operations of the church and they go to a separate dedicated account for youth activities. A question was asked about the \$250,000 figure in the narrative regarding the TLC House and if that was accurate. Kathe Houck asked if the paperwork has been completed to receive forgiveness for the PPP Loan. **Motion to accept the Treasurer's Report:** Zach Arbore. Second: Herb Harris. Motion carried.

Linda Reed asked there be a motion made in regards to the email from Rick Neish to update those who could sign checks on behalf of the church. Currently the Treasurer, Vice-President and President have the authority to sign checks due to Pastor Schock's retirement this year, but in the past the Treasurer and full-time Pastor were the signers with the President as a reserve. Kathe Houck **moved** to have the Congregation Council Treasurer and Interim Pastor as primary dual check signers and the President authorized as a check signer for a primary signer as requested by that primary signer. Second: Mark Jones. Motion carried.

**Ministry Report:** Pastor Schmitt updated Council that a sound professional was at the church this week testing our sound equipment and everything related to the sound system is in good order. The inspection by the sound professional was requested due to recent sound issues with the livestream and radio broadcast. Some issues are still under investigation with the radio station. In addition, the Finance Committee recently voted to upgrade the internet service speed with Comcast to help address the livestream issues. Dana Shannon asked who the contact person is with the livestream. Karen Mowry responded that there is a group of people on the Multimedia subcommittee which support the livestream, however Kelsey Stemple is the best initial contact.

**Executive Committee:** Meri Beth reported there was not an Executive Committee meeting and there is nothing to report.

**Motions:** The Finance Committee **moves** to recommend the distribution of remaining Lenten Funds of \$3,050: \$1,000 to Camp Sequanota, \$1,000 to Westmoreland Food Bank, \$1,050 to the Health and Wellness position. Motion carried.

Zach Arbore requested a vote to be held on another motion. Linda Reed granted the request. The Evangelism Committee **moves** to authorize the continuation of the radio broadcast for the amount of \$4,080. Motion carried.

**Return to Worship:** Meri Beth Elder shared that she will be sending invitations to all council members to join and be part of the Return to Worship Committee for the meeting this upcoming January.

**Unfinished Business:** None.

**New Business:** The Finance Committee **moves** to recommend the bid from JBL Construction to install a drop ceiling in the living room at the TLC House for the cost of \$1,680. Motion carried.

**Nomination and Election of Officers:** The results of the nomination and election of Congregation Council officers are as follows: Zach Arbore, President; Kathe Houck, Vice President; and Dana Shannon, Secretary.

Zach Arbore **moved** to unanimously elect Rick Nelsh as the Congregation Council Treasurer. Second: Herb Harris. Motion carried.

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

**Next meeting:** Tuesday, January 19, 2021 – 6:30 p.m.

# Constitution & Bylaws

## Required Council Actions

At the November 2020 Council Meeting, Council requested two revisions be made to the Constitution. First, that Council members be allowed to serve 2 full consecutive 3-year terms of office plus the balance of any remaining term to which they were appointed rather than a single 3-year term plus the balance of any remaining term to which they were appointed. Second, that Council shall have the constitutional authorization to spend up to \$40,000 on a non-budgeted item, rather than the current \$20,000.

In addition, the SWPA Synod Committee on Constitutions and Bylaws chaired by Pastor Bill Hauser has recommended the following revisions to our bylaws:

*"We would strongly recommend that the duties of the committees be placed in the continuing resolutions rather than the bylaws (B12.15.02), so should the Congregation Council decide to change those responsibilities within any committee, they can do so without having to call a congregation meeting for that purpose. (\*C18.02.) You will note that the alternate of having the congregation change those duties is still an option."*

I agree with our Synod's recommendation for revising our bylaws and recommend Council do the same. I also suggest that Council take the opportunity to review the duties of the standing committees to the Congregation Council. Once the bylaw revisions to B12.15.02. are approved by Council and the Congregation, I will codify the duties of the standing committees in the continuing resolutions for consideration by the Council.

Therefore, Council now needs to approve the following wording changes to the constitution & bylaws for consideration by the congregation at the next meeting of the congregation (should be the Annual Ministry meeting, normally to be held during the first quarter of the calendar year at a time and place determined by the Congregation Council):

C12.02. The members of the Congregation Council except the pastor(s) and deacon(s) shall be elected by written ballot at a legally called meeting of this congregation for the election of the Congregation Council members as specified in the bylaws. 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~~two 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. The term of office for youth representatives shall be for one year or until their successors are elected by this congregation, with the term of office beginning at the next scheduled meeting of the Congregation Council. Youth representatives of the Congregation Council shall be eligible to serve no more than three full terms. Should a youth representative obtain legal age (18 years old) or

become emancipated during their tenure on the Congregation Council, he or she shall be eligible for election to the Congregation Council as an adult member, providing they have not served more than one consecutive term as a youth representative. Otherwise, one year must elapse to become eligible for reelection as an adult member. Newly elected Congregation Council members shall be installed at a worship service prior to or following the date they assume office.

and;

C12.05. The Congregation Council shall be responsible for the financial and property matters of this congregation.

- c. The Congregation Council may enter into contracts of up to no more than \$240,000.00 for items not included in the budget.

and bylaw;

B12.15.02. Standing committees ~~of and their duties~~ to the Congregation Council shall consist of the following:

- a. Children, Youth & Family Ministry – delete listed duties in the bylaws
- b. Constitution & Bylaws – delete listed duties in the bylaws
- c. Christian Education – delete listed duties in the bylaws
- d. Evangelism – delete listed duties in the bylaws
- e. Fellowship – delete listed duties in the bylaws
- f. Finance – delete listed duties in the bylaws
- g. Personnel – delete listed duties in the bylaws
- h. Property – delete listed duties in the bylaws
- i. Social Ministry – delete listed duties in the bylaws
- j. Stewardship – delete listed duties in the bylaws
- k. Worship & Music – delete listed duties in the bylaws

The duties of the standing committees of the Congregation Council shall be specified in the continuing resolutions of the Congregation Council.

## **Evangelism Meeting Minutes January 11, 2021**

**Present:** Sharon Koter, Becky Tomlinson, Christine Weller, Karen Mowry

**Guest:** Kelsey Stemple Multimedia sub committee representative

**Devotions:** Becky Tomlinson

**Council Update:** Return to Worship was discussed.

**Health and Wellness:** Christine has been in touch with Michelle at the National Church Registry Apartments on Weldon Street. On St. Nicholas the church shared gifts with the residents. They have been in talks with setting up a bingo. On Tuesdays and Wednesday words will be posted to match to their bingo cards. There will be gifts to the winners. Christine also organized a new Welcome packet that includes the updated Trinity Welcome Brochure, a letter, and a Word in Season that invites the recipient to call the church for a free bible. Linda McDowell and Kathy Waldron made cloth bags that will have the Trinity information sewed onto it to put the Welcome packets in.

**Thankoffering Boxes** Over \$200 was received and Pr. Paula matched the first \$200. The donations were recorded as Sunday School Offering.

**Thrivent Action Teams** The video that was posted on the website helped the church to receive \$500 that will be used for the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner.

**Care Notes** Sharon will check to make sure we have Lenten and Easter Care Notes

**Team Support:** Discussion was held to possibly have cards to send to shut ins available in the Narthex for members to take and mail them. Possibly have a drop box there to put them in.

**Multimedia Committee** Kelsey told us that a volunteer is scheduled for every month of 2021 to do the Livestream . She also explained the procedure for checking the equipment every week prior to the Livestream. Problems with the Radio broadcast are totally out of our control. Updating the website is being looked into to make it more user friendly. Dana Shannon is helping with this.

**New Business:** How to do the Lenten Prayers was discussed. It could be shared on Facebook, email, etc

Some changes in the Prayer chain were discussed.

Missionary support was discussed and is being looked into.

Facility use form and Budget request forms are in the process of being prepared to share with committee chairs.

**Old Business:** Becky will send the post cards to the last New member class members this month.

Update Welcome Brochure – Kelsey has made some changes and wants to redesign it.

**Devotions February:** Sharon Koter

**Next meeting: Monday, February 8, 2021 3:15 PM in the Lounge?**

Notes from Return to Worship  
January 4, 2021 6:30 pm

1. Brief history of RTW: A brief history of how the RTW committee was formed in the spring of 2020 by Pastor Schock was reviewed.
2. Updates from Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod: Bishop Kusserow will be sending a letter this week with specific guidance, but the general recommendation is to not hold in person worship at this time.  
<https://www.swpasynod.org/synodnews/covid19>
3. Westmoreland County COVID numbers:  
Total Cases: 20,393  
Confirmed: 15,247  
Probable: 5,146  
Negative: 74,561  
Cases per 100,000: 5,845.0  
Deaths: 443  
Deaths per 100,000: 127.0  
Westmoreland Hospital campuses report that their positivity rate averaged 18.1% from March 2020 - December 31, 2020. December's rate was 33.6%.
4. Report of worship and gatherings from November and December:  
(Link to Google Sheets)  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JBHzEPmgVpE4Gg1kSfqzLdJCg26CVQT5/view?usp=sharing>
5. Concerns from congregation:
  - a. Ginny Capp: "Ginny Capp called this morning and wanted me to pass on her comments about the current status of church. She said, "We need it." She expressed that she thinks with masks, spacing, cleaning, and hand-washing, that we are safe and feels that church should be taking place." Ms. Capp's concerns were shared and will be forwarded to Council
  - b. Jim Stemler: CarHop meetings in March for planning but certain planning begins in January. The date this year will be June 6th. No on from RTW could find a reason that Mr. Stemler could not begin planning for this event. There were some suggestions that his planning should include contingency plans such as holding the event at Legion Keener park to allow for more attendees, portable restrooms, and reconfiguring eating areas.



6. Moving forward

- a. Return to worship February 7, 2021, all services with masks, no singing and social distancing.
- b. Ash Wednesday and Lent: Probably looking at 20% capacity
- c. Usher schedule and coordination. Volunteers from the congregation? We have lost John McNanamy and Dave Smeltzer.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding return to in person worship on February 7, 2021. Michael Macey took the time to survey 37 random members of the congregation from the directory and found that the majority of those surveyed wished to return to worship and were not concerned about becoming sick from attending in person services, in person, at Trinity.

The group agreed that in order to return to worship, there would need to be more help, specifically in the form of ushers and eucharistic ministers. If we return to worship, we would still have mitigation efforts in place, such as taking attendance and cleaning the public areas between services. We have also lost our usher coordinator, John McNanamy.

Concern was raised that when opening, we could alienate those who choose to be remote. That concern, along with the popularity of the drive-thru communion, led the group to believe it was important to continue with the practice. If we open to 4 services, it was expressed that it is an unrealistic expectation for the paid staff to manage all of those activities and perhaps the eucharistic ministers could run the drive thru communion.

The question of letting small groups and community use of the church was raised. Lucinda reminded us that the FACILITY USE FORM would be mandatory for anyone using church facilities, along with a review of the expectations in terms of masking, cleaning and distancing. There was a general agreement that we should see how return to worship occurs, and then address small groups during the February 16, 2021 Council meeting. Ash Wednesday is February 17, 2021.

\*\*\*The motion before Council is to plan to return to worship, February 7, 2021, all services with masks, distancing, sign in sheets, and no singing IF we are able to secure adequate ushers and eucharistic ministers to maintain the safety of all staff and congregants.

Next meeting: January 25, 2021 at 6:30 pm (possible 7:00 pm) I'll survey the group to see if they would like a time change.

## **Minutes for Stewardship Meeting 01/05/2021 (via zoom)**

**Members Present:** Zachary Arbore, Ted Massa, Barbara Artuso, Candace Bungard, Christine Weller and Pastor Paula Schmitt

**Devotions:** were presented by Barbara Artuso. Devotions for the January meeting will be given by Pastor Paula

**Council report:** was given by Zach Arbore. Zach spoke that the council meeting in December centered around discussions regarding reopening the church to in-person worship. The council also elected new officers which was relayed and discussed with the committee

**Renovation report:** (Reported on April, July, October and January). Ted Massa and Barbara Artuso spoke to the report on the renovation fund. Ted spoke first regarding the original purpose of the fund so as to gain context for the discussion on the status of giving to the fund. Barbara further explained that the giving to the fund essentially paid for 10 months worth of payments on the mortgage this year and that the remaining 2 months worth of payments were drawn from the account. It was noted that this is why the fund exists, but that continued drawing from this fund overtime could pose problems both in terms of paying the mortgage and bank capital for collateral. The total amount of the fund was not known at the time of the discussion. Zach and Ted will research this for the next meeting and will make note of it although the fund will not be discussed again in its entirety until April. Further discussion noted that a point would be made to continue to emphasize giving to this fund by the congregation.

### **Old Business:**

- **Year long Stewardship campaign and first interview:** Prior to the meeting, the committee was provided with the first video interview for the committee's year long campaign which featured the Christmas Basket ministry represented by Christine Stahl. Zach Arbore performed the interview. It was mutually agreed by the committee as a whole that the length was excessive (total video length was approximately 20 minutes). The committee requested further editing of the video to hopefully reduce the video down to 7 minutes or less. Other editing suggestions were made in terms of wording and phrasing to clean up the presentation of the product. Zach will work to edit the video down to reduce its length and clean up those noted items then report back to the committee when it is finished. The end goal of this video was also discussed along with how best to draw attention to the video. The committee discussed having a preview of the video and summary placed in the bulletin insert to draw attention to the full length video to be posted on the website and facebook page. Christine Weller and Pastor Paula noted a new program that was being started by the office via the facebook page called "Witness Wednesday". The committee discussed using this short video series to "advertise" for

the full length video. Zach will discuss this idea with Kelsey Stemple at the office and report back to the committee. Discussion continued at length regarding more potential targets for the video series going forward. The project is currently on-going.

- **Phone appeal and “thank you” letter for the Triangle:** Ted Massa spoke to this agenda item. Discussion centered around the letter that was submitted on behalf of the Stewardship committee by Ted for the Triangle as well as the appeal by Carol McIntyre. The committee agreed on the success of the letter and its presentation in the Triangle were favorable. It is also noted that the phone appeal was performed successfully.

#### **New Business**

- **Committee resignations and retirements:** The committee was informed by Barbara Artuso that she would be moving to New Orleans, LA later this month and would be rejoining a faith community near there that she had previously been a member of. As such, Barbara announced her resignation from the committee due to her residence change. The committee accepted this resignation with regret. The committee wishes to thank Barbara for her many years of service and leadership on this committee. Her presence will be greatly missed.

Next meeting scheduled for February 2nd, 2021 at 6:30pm via Zoom