

Lutheran Church of the Cross
“Making Jesus Known by Sharing Our Gifts”
Council Meeting
March 11, 2021

Call to Order

President Mike Geiermann called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

In Attendance: Pastor Lisa Ahlness, Deacon Janie Hague (virtual), Mike Geiermann, Cherie Krueger, Kylie Blanchard, Ron Borth (virtual), Kari Harris (virtual), Krisi Kunz, Art Wheeler, Connie Werner (virtual), and Mark Kunze.

Devotions

Pastor Lisa led the Council in prayer.

Approval of Prior Minutes

No changes to the submitted February meeting minutes.

Cheri motioned/Krisi second/Approved

Treasurer’s Report

All bills and statements as of Feb. 28 have been paid. All February bank statements have been reconciled and registries are correct. Total income for February was \$21,386.45. The total income was \$10,469 less than the Operating Expense Budget. This lesser amount is not unusual for February.

The February expenses were \$30,006.59. This total indicates a net loss of \$8,620.14 for the month. The prepaying of \$3,080.25 in special assessments for March is counted in this total. Thus, the operating loss was \$5,539.89.

The church has received formal notice from the City of Bismarck that a street resealing project will be completed this summer. The church will be assessed for improvements on the east and south side of the property. Special assessments for this project are estimated to be between \$10,000 - \$14,000, with the first payment due in 2023. Assessments are estimated to be paid over three years.

The contribution to the Western North Dakota Synod for February will be \$918.

The church will begin using the PPP loan with disbursement of the March salaries.

Pastor’s Report

Confirmation is ongoing. A Lenten sermon series has been taking place at both the Wednesday and Sunday services, which have been well received.

Pastor Lisa attended the Camp of the Cross virtual Annual Meeting on Feb. 28. She is also leading a small group for the new Six Weeks on Money course, as well as leading Financial University class held on Sunday evenings at the church. The kitchen floor scrubbing machine has arrived.

The Nominating Committee will be meeting to discuss a replacement for John Spilde on the Endowment Committee following his recent move to Minnesota.

There have been two recent group requests to use the church. A family from out of town, with ties to the church, has requested to hold a private baptism and have a gathering of 30 people following the service, and a PEO group, which includes church members, have requested to hold a meeting in June with approximately 25 people.

Director of Discipleship Report

Deacon Janie submitted an oral and written report to the Council:

1.) I am busy planning for 1st communion classes in March, I have been in conversation with all the 3rd and 4th graders about upcoming classes. I asked the families to let me know how many people they plan to have at the service, so that we can get an idea for numbers. With each first communion family we are at 100 people.

2.) I am planning Palm Sunday activities.

a. 5 church Palm Sunday easter egg hunt. Kind of like geo catching. Families get directions to the church. We will walk through the holy week story. At each stop participants will get eggs filled with candy and an item to remind them of a part of holy week. Participants have to register. This has been published in the newsletter, bulletin, and an email sent out to all families.

b. Palm Sunday virtual parade. Congregation members will take home a palm branch the week before Palm Sunday and record themselves waving a palm. They then have to send the video to Janie. We will show the video during our worship service on Palm Sunday. More information will also be put in the newsletter, bulletin, and email.

3.) I continue to attend text study with other rostered leaders in our area.

4.) I will be gone March 13-14th to Camp of the Cross for the spring WND LYO (Western North Dakota Synod Lutheran Youth Organization) board meeting. I sit on the board as an adult advisor for our conference, the Heart River conference.

5.) I am working on planning the youth church service for Sunday May 9th and Wednesday May 12th, and the graduation church service for Sunday May 16th and Wednesday May 19th (We have 8 graduating seniors this year.)

6.) I have been in conversation with UCC about the possibility of Vacation Bible School this summer, it is their turn to host. If they are not comfortable doing VBS this year, I will look at doing something this summer for our families.

7.) Church School will end April 25th and 28th. I talked with the teachers, and the end of the year schedule is awkward, and they felt ending the end of April was a good choice.

8.) I continue to go to our monthly kids' ministry meeting with other churches.

9.) The Education team is really excited about starting up. We have been discussing our goals and visiting the constitution and policy handbook.

10.) I was asked by some high school youth to start up youth group again, they state that they are ready and feel we are in an okay spot with COVID that we could gather for youth group. I am talking with the youth to see when would be a good time to get together.

Old Business

Policy Manual Update

The Council will address this subject at its upcoming retreat on March 20.

New Business

Special Assessments

President Mike Geiermann noted in March the church began paying ahead on its existing Special Assessments, with a pre-payment of \$3,000 on March 1. The remaining balance of \$ 9,348.50 is from a 2010 project and, if a healthy balance remains in the General Fund, will be paid off with three additional pre-payment installations in 2021. The church recently received a letter from the City of Bismarck regarding new specials that will be assessed to the church totaling between \$10,600 - \$14,700 for an upcoming road repair project in 2022. The first payment would be due in Feb. 2023. The church can protest the new assessments prior to March 18.

ELCA Churchwide Initiative/Re-Opening of the Church

Ken Will spoke to the Council regarding the pandemic's impacts on the wider ELCA church. He noted the pandemic has exasperated mainstream churches and Lutheranism/ELCA has experienced significant decreases in membership and participation, and churches are closing at an alarming rate. In North Dakota, the number of pastoral vacancies in western North Dakota is larger than it has ever been before.

While brick and mortar churches are struggling, Evangelical churches are growing. ELCA nationwide is now exploring how Lutheranism can be more relevant today. Ken encouraged the LCC Council to look at bringing people back to church, not only as restrictions change in the pandemic, but into the future. He recommended the Council explore a visioning process and noted each time the church has done this process, it has resulted in very positive changes. Ken provided the Council with an article and study guide from the March 2021 *Living Lutheran* magazine, "So More People May Know the Way of Jesus: ELCA implements Future Church design."

He encouraged the Council to move toward opening the church, as people want to get back to coffee/fellowship time, while adapting to being more cautious, such as placing four chairs around a table instead of eight. Ken also encouraged the Council to communicate with members about steps to re-open and to work towards committee meetings and activities taking place again at the church.

Pastor Lisa thanked Ken for his thoughts and the materials he provided the Council and stressed the importance of the church and council planning and looking toward the future. The Council noted it would discuss this subject further at its March 20 retreat.

Holy Week Services

Discussion was held regarding Maundy Thursday service, which will include first communion for the 2020 and 2021 classes. Deacon Janie requested an RSVP to determine a headcount and learned the church should anticipate roughly 100 people for first communion. In addition to those families, the church also needed to take into account singers, ushers, media team, and members of the Living Last Supper. This put the congregation well over the current limit set by the Council at 100 people in the sanctuary. The decision was made to hold two services (5:30 & 7:00) for Maundy Thursday. The Living Last Supper will occur at the 7:00pm service for sure, which will be live streamed and, if the group of gentlemen are willing and able, also at the 5:30 service. If the Living Last Supper cannot happen at 5:30, then Pastor Lisa will lead a traditional Maundy Thursday service. The first communion families will be split between the two services.

Capacity within the sanctuary was also discussed. Statewide guidelines currently allow 80% capacity for gathering spaces. Allowing 150-175 people in the sanctuary will put LCC at roughly 50% capacity. The current Council decision is for 100 people within the sanctuary. The decision was made to slowly begin easing restrictions within the church and increasing capacity.

Easing restrictions will include removing the tape on the chairs within the sanctuary, and gradually increasing capacity in 50 person increments. The 50-person increase will first occur on April 1, 2021, for the Holy Week services and increase to a 150-person capacity. Masks will continue to be required at this time. Following Holy Week, LCC will begin to ease into other fellowship activities, such as coffee after services and outdoor summer fellowship opportunities. The LCC Council will continue to monitor the restrictions and adjust as needed to ease or tighten restrictions based on current COVID-19 risk level in the area. Kari Harris will draft a communication to the congregation to post online.

Senior high youth group will begin planning activities and meeting.

There will be a private family baptism at the church on May 8, 2021. The family is nearly all from out of town and asked if they could have a family meal at the church following the baptism. The Council agreed to this, as long as the family brought in all food and items with them and cleaned up when they were done. This would be roughly 30 people.

June 25, 2021, a local PEO group, who has members from the LCC congregation, asked if they could use the church for a gathering. The Council agreed to this with the understanding they would bring in all food items and clean up when they were done.

Pastor Lisa and a few congregation members were interviewed as part of a story by KFYZ TV. The story will air on March 11, 2021.

Pastor Lisa was appointed Dean of the Heart River Conference by the Synod. This conference includes a few congregations in Bismarck, as well as the west central portion of the state.

Next Meeting

Thursday, April 8 at 6:30 p.m.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.