

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

Call to Order

President Mike Geiermann called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m.

In Attendance: Pastor Lisa Ahlness, Deacon Janie Hague, Mike Geiermann, Kylie Blanchard, Ron Borth, Kari Harris, Cherie Krueger, Mark Kunze, and Art Wheeler

Absent: Krisi Kunz and Connie Werner

Devotions

Pastor Lisa led the Council in prayer.

Approval of Prior Minutes

No changes to the submitted July meeting minutes.

Cherie motioned/Mark seconded/Approved.

Treasurer’s Report

All bills and statements as of July 31 have been paid and all bank statements reconciled and registries correct. The total normal adjusted income for July was \$29,283 and the July adjusted expenses were \$26,981. This indicates a net gain of \$2,301.85. The church received a generous charitable gift of \$10,000 this month, which helps with this positive total.

LCC’s income for the first seven months of 2021 is 97.3% of the Operating Budget and income for the first seven months is 81.1% of the Total Budget. Expenses are in a reasonable range and are \$21,906 below the adopted budget.

The July contributions to the Western North Dakota Synod will be \$1,316 and LCC has contributed \$9,944 to the Synod in the first seven months of the year

Kylie motioned to accept the Treasurer’s Report/Cherie seconded/Approved.

Art noted in September the Council will need to decide which Portico plan it will purchase for each of the church’s full-time employees. Art will get information from Portico and share it with the Council prior to the September meeting. A decision will have to be made by Oct. 1 or the church’s plans will automatically default to the next lower plan. Portico also noted the overall cost increase of its plans for the upcoming year will be approximately 3%.

The Vanco online payment system is upgrading its mobile app and the current Vanco app will be discontinued on Sept. 30. Art noted 31 church members currently use the online giving option and five use the Vanco app for giving. Art recently watched a webinar on the new app and will contact all members using the mobile app to give them information on how to switch to the new giving app.

Pastor’s Report

Pastor Lisa noted Teen and Adult Challenge led worship at the July Summer BBQ and sponsorship information for Teen and Adult Challenge participants is available in the narthex. Marin Traynor

represented Camp of the Cross at the August Summer BBQ. Pastor Lisa asked that everyone keep Camp of the Cross in their prayers as the camp had to close early this summer due to COVID-19. This is causing financial concerns as they were not able to finish out their summer season.

Pastor Lisa continues to participate in Conference check-ins and text study each week and said they are very helpful in knowing what other churches are doing in regards to COVID-19 measures. She noted Pastor Larry Giese preached on July 25, as she was out of town and Janie was at Camp of the Cross for the Summer Sunday Service and to serve as chaplain for the week at camp. She also had a Deans Meeting with the Bishop the first week in August.

Pastor Lisa has been out in the neighborhood delivering invitations to the Neighborhood Block Party on Wednesday, Aug. 18, at UCC and LCC churches.

First Lutheran in Mandan is currently in the call process for a second pastor and has also been looking into calling a deacon. They have been talking with Pastor Lisa and Deacon Janie to learn more about the deacon call process.

Pastor Lisa has continued to meet with the Worship and Music Committee as well as the Education Team, which is making some changes to the confirmation curriculum and process for the upcoming year. She noted on Sunday, Aug. 15, Pastor Gail Hagerty with Heart River and Bridges of Hope on the YCC campus will be preaching at the service and sharing information about their congregation's ministries.

Pastor Lisa will be gone on vacation Aug. 20 – Sept. 11.

Director of Discipleship Report

Deacon Janie said she met with the Call Committee at First Lutheran in Mandan to talk about the process of calling a Deacon, as the congregation is considering calling a Deacon and wanted to know more about the process. She shared her experience with working at a congregation and then being called there as a Deacon.

She has been meeting with the Education Committee and they are working to revamp confirmation for the upcoming year. There will be a different curriculum and changes to the service project component, with kids signing up to run the projector on Wednesday nights, usher and be a dishwasher (with an adult). They are also changing some of the requirements for the 8th grade confirmation students and are providing opportunities for students to learn more about church committees and operations. Those students who will be getting confirmed in the fall will also have a confirmation banquet. Deacon Janie noted the current plan is to start church school and confirmation as in-person classes, but to remain flexible to changing circumstances.

Church school is still in need of teachers, with a few more needed on Sundays. Volunteers would teach the Sunday School lesson once every 4-6 weeks. Deacon Janie noted she is also in need of one male small group confirmation leader by Sept. 8.

The Youth Room is painted, and Deacon Janie encouraged everyone to check out the work done by the youth to redo the space. She spent a week at Camp of the Cross as chaplain and was busy helping with camp activities and other needs at the camp. She will attend a mental health training on Aug. 25.

Old Business

Copier Lease

The five-year lease on the church's current copier machine is up on Dec. 31. The church has the option of purchasing the current machine, buying a new machine outright, or leasing a new copier machine. The current lease is a 60-month lease at \$307.64 (includes service contract).

The church could purchase the current machine for approximately \$2,345, plus an annual \$1,211 service contract; upgrade to a new machine for a lump sum purchase price of \$9,470; or enter a lease payment option (which includes the service contract) at 36 months/\$366.08 per month, 48 months/\$319.68 per month, or 60 months/\$278.96 per month.

Mark made a motion to enter a 60-month lease on a new copier machine with Fireside Office Products/Cherie seconded/Approved.

Sanctuary Projector

The bulb was faulty in the sanctuary projector, and a new bulb was purchased and replaced by AVI at a cost of \$800 (parts and labor).

CDC Guidelines/Masks

With the increase in COVID-19 cases in the community and county, the Council discussed recommending masks be worn in the church. Pastor Lisa noted the CDC is recommending masks be worn in places with a high spread of COVID-19 and where large gatherings are held. The Council decided to recommend masks be worn in the church building, as per CDC guidelines, and to monitor the changing situation and address the topic again in September.

Ron motioned to put signs up at the church to recommend masks be worn in the building, per CDC guidelines, as well as noting this on the church website/Kari seconded/Approved.

Personnel Evaluations

President Mike noted he will send an email to the Personnel Committee, which includes President Mike, Vice President Cherie, Secretary Kylie, and Ron) to set up a time to meet to discuss the process for staff evaluations that will take place this fall.

New Business

Sanctuary Sound Issues

Pastor Lisa noted there has been a problem with feedback on the microphones in the sanctuary and, in particular, the microphones worn by her and Deacon Janie when they stand behind the altar. Although this can't be heard on the live stream, it is disruptive to those in the sanctuary. Many volunteers have done troubleshooting on this issue, but it is not remedied. Tom Harris asked if he could bring a sound engineer into the church to observe a service and then teach those involved in the service how to address the sound issues when they arise. While the church does need a new sound board, that is a significant cost, and this step could help to be an immediate solution to the sound issues experienced during the service. The Council approved of Tom bringing in a sound engineer to address the issue in the sanctuary.

Accompanist

Eve Kath has agreed to be a part-time accompanist and has been working with Robin. Pastor Lisa noted there is another lead on an individual who may also want to accompany the services on a part-time basis

as well. She noted she has contacted other churches to see what they pay accompanists and it ranged from \$50 to \$100 per service, with compensation for rehearsal ranging from \$15 to \$20 dollars. LCC currently pays its accompanist \$50 per service, with no payment for weekly rehearsal. Pastor Lisa recommended the church pay accompanists \$50 per service (approx. two hours) and \$15 per weekly rehearsal (approx. one hour). Art noted the current 2021 budget line for accompanist has about \$1,200 remaining. He said the \$15 for rehearsal for the remaining five months of the year could be accommodated in the remaining funding.

Ron motioned to pay accompanists \$15 for weekly rehearsal for the remainder of the year and to keep the payment for playing at a service at \$50 for the remainder of the year/Cherie seconded/Approved.

The Council decided to address raising the amount paid to the accompanist for services during budget planning for the 2022 budget year.

Church Opener Position

Currently Jeff Thomas and Art Wheeler open the church each Sunday, and it has been done as a volunteer position for many years. They would like to pass the Sunday Opener duties on to new volunteers and Art encouraged the Council to advertise this volunteer opportunity in order to fill it as soon as possible.

The Council decided to advertise in the weekly bulletin, monthly newsletter and on the LCC website. Kylie will write the information that will be used in these advertisements. While it could remain a volunteer position, the Council also noted this may also be considered for a paid position in the 2022 budgeting discussions.

Background Checks

Deacon Janie provided the Council with information on a Safe Gatherings program for completing background checks on volunteers that work with the church's youth. This is a WND Synod approved program and the cost for each background check is \$45. Deacon Janie noted the first round of background checks would be more costly, as they would be done on all volunteers working with youth at LCC (Sunday school teachers, confirmation leaders/mentors, and youth group chaperones/volunteers, etc.). She estimated the church would need to complete 20-30 background checks in the first year, at a maximum cost of \$1,400.

Deacon Janie recommended this cost be included in the 2022 budget, so background checks could be completed as soon as possible. The background checks are valid for three years. She stressed this is an important step in protecting the youth of the church and the church itself, and in being proactive in addressing the safety of LCC's youth. The Council noted this would be part of the 2022 budget discussion.

Stewardship Week

Pastor Lisa noted the Worship and Music Committee is planning to host a Committee Fair on Sunday, Oct. 10, and Wednesday, Oct. 13, to invite church members to engage with the various committees at the church and encourage members to get involved in the church. Tables will be set up throughout the fellowship hall and narthex and each committee is being asked to provide information and a small activity at their table as part of the Committee Fair. Each Council member is responsible for contacting the heads of the committees in their portfolio to encourage them to participate in this event.

Israel Trip

Ron brought up concerns he had regarding the upcoming trip to Israel that is being led by Pastor Lisa and attended by LCC members as well as other community members. He noted he was concerned that the church could hold some liability as its name is on the trip brochure. In addition, he was concerned that Pastor Lisa's trip is being largely covered by the travel agency and she is also being paid by the church while on the trip.

It was determined during the Council members' discussion of these concerns that the trip is coordinated by a travel company for LCC and the travel company would hold the liability for the trip. In addition, Pastor Lisa will be working in the capacity of the trip's leader and is compensated through the travel agency with most of her trip's cost being covered, and it is also her decision as to how she uses her time away from work.

Next Meeting

The Council's meetings will now go back to the regular schedule of the second Thursday of each month. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, Sept. 9, at 6:30 p.m.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.