

Lutheran Church of the Cross
“Making Jesus Known by Sharing Our Gifts”
Council Meeting
October 14, 2021

Call to Order

President Mike Geiermann called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

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

Devotions

Pastor Lisa led the Council and guests in prayer to open the meeting.

Motion to Amend the Agenda

Ron made a motion to amend the agenda to discuss masks at the church and hear from those in attendance at the beginning of the meeting/ Mark seconded/Approved.

Masks in the Church

President Mike welcomed those in attendance to speak to the Council.

Deb Carpenter read a letter to the Council signed by herself and 39 additional church members asking for the mask requirement to be removed from the church, citing a division it is causing in the church among those who wear masks and those who feel unwelcome if they do not wear a mask in the church. Deb cited there is a level of hurt and division among some congregational members because of masks being required in the church, and she asked the Council on behalf of all those who signed the letter to remove the mask requirement.

Ken Will then spoke to the Council to address a lack of communication between the Council and the congregation and to encourage steps be taken to increase communication on all fronts to better address changes and issues in the church. He also recommended the Council remove the mask requirement at the church.

Krisi noted that President Mike had asked the full congregation for feedback on the masks prior to the decision being made at the September meeting. She said the overall feedback received by the Council was that the congregation wanted in person services to continue and for the church not to have to shut down again. In addition, she noted, the Council had decided to follow CDC guidelines from the beginning of the pandemic and believed masks in the church were the appropriate measure to take at the time, given the Delta variant and increase in positive cases in the community.

Robin Johnson spoke to the Council about the CDC Guidelines, which states churches should “recommend” masks are worn. Pastor Lisa noted the CDC also recommended all individuals, both vaccinated and unvaccinated, should wear a mask in indoor settings in areas of high transmission, which includes Burleigh County.

John Kraft spoke to the Council about the Halo Air Units that are on all furnaces in the building, which kill 99% of all airborne pathogens in the building. He said this has made the air in the building very safe and he didn’t want people to have to wear masks in the building. Kari asked how long it took the units to

clear the air throughout the whole building and Pastor Lisa noted she had been in contact with H.A. Thompson and Sons, who had installed the units, and was told it takes 60 to 90 seconds to clear the air in the building.

President Mike noted, while the units are very beneficial to the building and congregation members and are greatly appreciated, this means it is unlikely the units would clear the air between two individuals who would be considered close contacts without masks. President Mike also said the feedback from the congregation prior to the mask decision being made was to take steps to not have to shut down the church. He also noted he believes no one has been told they are not welcome if they don't wear a mask or have been told to wear a mask if they are not while in the church.

Kari asked how the mask requirement is impacting education at the church. Deacon Janie noted some families have expressed their dislike to masks being worn, but most are still attending in person. She noted the kids are happy to be able to come together at the church and are willing to wear masks to be in person. Deacon Janie stressed the importance of the kids being in the church to build relationships with their peers and teachers/mentors. Kylie noted, as a confirmation leader, confirmation being held via Zoom was tough over the last year and a half both on the kids and leader, and she doesn't want to see the education programs have to return to Zoom classes.

Kari noted if the CDC is using the word "recommended," and if the Council is following CDC guidelines, that is the wording that should be used regarding masks at the church as well.

President Mike called for a motion to change the current mask policy. Cheri motioned to change the current mask policy from "masks will be worn" to "masks are recommended" in the church building. Kari seconded. President Mike called for a roll call vote:

Yes vote: Mark, Krisi, Kari and Cheri

No vote: Ron, Kylie, and Mike

The motion carried in a 4-3 vote, and the mask policy was changed to "recommended" in the church building. Communications will go out to the entire congregation immediately regarding this change.

Approval of Prior Minutes

No changes to the submitted September meeting minutes.

Kari motioned/Cherie seconded/Approved.

Treasurer's Report

All bills and statements as of September 30 have been paid and all September bank statements and registries are correct. The September income fell \$11,787 short of the Operating Expense budget, with \$3,200 of the shortfall attributed to the prepaid special assessment payment on Sept. 11. Total adjusted income for September was \$20,068.44 and the income for the first nine months of the year is 77.9% of the Total Budget, including the PPP income. The September adjusted expenses were \$31,860, which also include a second half insurance payment of \$938. The expenses continue to be inline or below the adopted budget. The contribution to the Western North Dakota Synod for September will be \$938 and LCC has contributed \$12,105 to the Synod for the first nine months of the year.

Ron motioned to approve the Treasurer's Report/Kylie seconded/Approved.

Art asked the Council if they would like to send out Giving Statements to the congregation at the end of the month. This includes a letter about the financial status of the church and a giving statement to the church's members. The Council was in consensus that Giving Statements should be sent to the church members.

Pastor's Report

Pastor Lisa is continuing to lead weekly bible studies and attend weekly text studies. She noted new members were welcomed at the church on Sunday, Oct. 10.

Pastor Lisa spoke about the unexpected passing of Pastor Donna Dohrmann and how her funeral was an outpouring of grief and love for her family. She will be greatly missed.

Pastor Lisa, Kari and Cheri attended the Missouri Slope Lutheran Care Center Annual Meeting on behalf of LCC. She noted the church was also welcomed to tour the MSLCC's new facility on north Washington Street on October 19 at 9am. Cheri thanked the Council for the opportunity to attend the annual meeting.

Confirmation is going strong, and Pastor Lisa is also attending a renewed gathering of Women's Ministry Leaders. She is also working to help line things up for Stewardship Week in October and will be preaching for Prairie Faith Devotions on Oct. 19.

The Alter Focus is "Pillow Fight," which is a challenge among ecumenical partners to provide pillows for the homeless until the Thanksgiving Eve Service.

Director of Discipleship Report

Deacon Janie noted the Youth Group is off to a slow start this fall, and attendance is low for church school as well. Confirmation attendance is high.

She attended a continuing education event in September on suicide prevention training. She is also attending an eight-week course on "Life Coaching." The Synod sponsored her attendance to become a coach within the synod.

A confirmation banquet will be held on Oct. 30 from 5:30 – 7 p.m. for confirmands and their families. Deacon Janie is looking for help with the banquet as well as an individual to take confirmation pictures that night. Trunk or Treat is scheduled for Oct. 31, but it may have to be cancelled for lack of individuals signed up.

Deacon Janie is meeting with other area youth directors to discuss a Christmas program. The LYO gathering is being held in mid-October and Janie is attending. She also attended the Rostered Leaders Convention in September and noted it was great to be in attendance. She will be gone on vacation November 21-30.

Old Business

Personnel Evaluations

Krisi offered to help President Mike develop a template for personnel evaluation. She will also reach out to the Synod to see if they have a template for use by churches.

Stewardship Fair

A Stewardship Fair will be held on Sunday, Oct. 10, and Wednesday, Oct. 13. in the church narthex and fellowship hall. It was noted next year communications will be stronger regarding the event and hopefully it will continue to grow.

Copier Machine Lease

Connie will contact Fireside Office Products regarding the copier lease, which expires at the end of the year and the new lease, previously approved by the Council, that will take effect at the beginning of 2022.

New Business**Part-time Education Director**

Deacon Janie noted, last spring when the Education Committee formed, they felt she was pulled in too many directions. A gift was given to the church to fund a part-time education director (possibly for a year time frame). The Budget Committee will look at the possibility of using this gift to fund this position and keeping it in the future.

Special Assessment Payment

Art noted if the church pays off its remaining special assessments totaling \$3,104.81 by Oct. 27, it would reduce the tax bill by \$866.52 for 2022. The final special assessment payment was originally planned to be paid in December, which would be the final of four installments the Council voted to set up and pay to pay the remaining special assessment in 2021. Mark motioned to pay the remaining assessment balance by Oct. 27/ Krisi seconded/Approved.

Giving to Synod

Pastor Lisa noted in the first nine months of the year, LCC has given \$12,000 of its pledge of \$25,000 to the Western North Dakota Synod. She asked the Council to consider giving a portion of the deficit in the fall, rather than waiting until the end of the year to make up the difference. The Council decided to table the topic until a later meeting when a better picture of the end of the year financial projections is available.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 16, at 6:30 p.m.

Adjournment

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