

Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church Council Retreat

Minutes

January 12 and 13, 2022

The Congregational Council held its annual retreat on the evenings of Wednesday January 12th and Thursday January 13th between 6:30 and 9pm. Pastor David Young, Curtiss Grymala, Vonda Wilt, Diane Milburn, Bruce Lothrop, Dustie Fisher, David Look, Lee Braithwaite, Betty Puffinberger, and John Fredericksen were present at the meeting on both evenings. These minutes cover only the portions of the meetings where Congregational business was discussed.

Call to order

2021 Council President called the business meeting to order at approximately 7:19 pm.

Opening Prayer

Pastor David Young opened the meeting with prayer.

Officer Elections

Pastor David Young led the election of officers. John Fredericksen was nominated for the office of Council President. John was unanimously elected to the office of President.

Vonda Wilt was nominated for the office of Vice President. Vonda was unanimously elected to the office of Vice President.

Betty Puffinberger was nominated for the office of Treasurer. Betty was unanimously elected to the office of Treasurer.

Bruce Lothrop was nominated for the office of Secretary. Bruce was unanimously elected to the office of Secretary.

Minutes of December meeting

2021 Council Secretary Bruce Lothrop had emailed the minutes of the December 14, 2021 Council meeting to all members of Council prior to the retreat. The minutes of the December meeting were approved, as presented, by motion.

Monthly devotions

Pastor Dave distributed a sign-up list for monthly devotions. Members signed up for months, as follows:

February:	Bruce Lothrop
March:	Vonda Wilt
April:	John Fredericksen
May:	Diane Milburn
June:	Curtiss Grymala
July:	Dustie Fisher
August:	Lee Braithwaite
September:	David Look

October: Betty Puffinberger
November: John Fredericksen
December: Pastor Dave

December Financials

Final year-end financial information was not complete at the time of the retreat, so no formal report was available. Pastor Dave reported that Bookkeeper Kim Williams estimated that income for 2021 will exceed expenses by about \$10,000.

Pastor's report

Pastor Dave distributed a written report to all members of council by email prior to the meeting. Highlights of the report included:

- "Christmas in a Barn" was held outdoors at Bethel. About 300 worshipers attended.
- About 50 worshipers attended the Candlelight service on Christmas Eve. Concerns about Covid-19 likely discouraged many people from attending indoor worship.
- In response to the rapid spread of the Omicron variant of Covid-19, Bethel will return to virtual only worship through January.
- Planning for Easter and Lenten worship is underway.
- The Adult Forum schedule is being revised. Some sessions were cancelled in December to facilitate tours highlighting the "New Day Initiative." Adult Forum was canceled in January due to Covid-19 concerns.
- Work on the Community Fridge Program (FREEDGE) is continuing. This program will provide free, high-quality food to community members.

Council agreed to reschedule Coffee with Council to the last Sunday of each month, beginning in February.

Pastor Dave asked that Council consider adding an additional week of vacation to his benefits package, rather than a 3% raise. A 3% raise is being considered for other staff. Council generally expressed support for the additional vacation time.

Board Reports

Worship board

Communion packets will be available for pickup from the office during January while Worship is virtual only.

Secure offering

Each month, a member of Council will be responsible for securing the offering after worship. The member should take the basket(s) or plate(s) containing the offering, and, with a witness, bring the offering to the office. Any loose cash should be counted, and placed in an empty envelope, labeled with the amount of cash enclosed and initialed by those present. All offering should then be and deposited in the safe in the office. A sign-up sheet was circulated so that each council member could sign up for a month. ~~Month's~~ The months selected were as follows:

January: Not needed, as worship is virtual only.
February: John Fredericksen

March: Vonda Wilt
April: Bruce Lothrop
May: Curtiss Grymala
June: (no one assigned)
July: Dustie Fisher
August: Lee Braithwaite
September: David Look
October: Diane Milburn
November: Betty Puffinberger
December: (no one assigned)

The secretary agreed to send reminders to each member to help members remember their assignments.

Council organization: Up/In/Out

For many years, each member of Council, other than members of the Executive Committee, has been assigned responsibility for one of the six ministry boards (Worship, Learning, Congregational Life, Prayer and Care, and Ministry Support.). Each ministry team at Bethel would fall under one of the Ministry Boards. Any team that needed support from council would reach out to the member of council overseeing the board that included the team in question. Going forward, rather than organizing ministry teams into six boards, we will organize the existing teams into three Dimensions of Ministry, Up, In and Out. Up ministries will focus on relationship with God. In ministries will focus on the Bethel community. Out ministries will focus on the communities extending beyond Bethel. Three members of Council have been assigned to lead each dimension.

This new alignment will help focus Bethel's ministry on those three key aspects of Ministry (how we relate to God through faith and worship, how we support and build our community, and how we reach into the wider world.) It will also allow members of Council to work in collaboration with each other, rather than giving each member an area to oversee alone. Assignments are as follow:

Up Dimension:
Lee Braithwaite
David Look
Betty Puffinberger
In Dimension:
Dustie Fisher
Vonda Wilt
Curtiss Gymala
Out Dimension:
Diane Milburn
Bruce Lothrop
John Fredericksen

Ministry teams may have multiple dimensions, and leadership may be shared.

New Day Update

The “New Day” team will meet with the primary contractor in January for estimates sorted into the following categories:

Maintenance:

Including painting, flooring, ceiling tiles, lighting, and ADA access requirements.

Sanctuary:

Including carpeting, pew covers, painting, moving the Baptismal Font, reducing the alter footprint, and addition of a partition between the narthex and the sanctuary.

Signage:

Including a new sign on the road frontage, and external signs identifying entrances and facilities (such as Fellowship Hall, the Office, the Underground, etc.)

The maintenance phase and sanctuary phases will be presented to the congregation for discussion. The signage task can likely be reviewed for approval by Council.

When final estimates are compiled, Council will meet with Bethel’s Trustees to discuss financing.

Hospitality Team:

Pastor Dave proposed establishing a “Hospitality Team” to take the place of existing ushers and greeters during worship services. The team would fill the roles of ushers and greeters (ensuring that visitors and prospective members feel welcome and have their needs met, as well as assisting congregants in finding seating if the sanctuary is crowded.) The team concept would offer more flexibility compared to that of dedicated ushers and ~~dedicated~~ greeters. Pastor Dave and George Donovan will gather a team.

Alternative Income Streams

Council discussed developing new income streams as supplements to tithes and offerings. Possible new income streams include collecting fees for the use of Bethel’s space, applying for Thrivent action team funds, and establishing an endowment fund for Bethel.

Intro to 2022 MSP

Council began a review of the 2022 Ministry Spending plan, for further discussion on the second night of the retreat.

Other Business

Dustie Fisher reported that Charlie Moyer and Jerry Fisher have been replacing bulbs for outdoor lighting when needed.

Adjournment for the Evening

The meeting adjourned for the evening at approximately 9pm.

Resumption of Business on January 13th

Discussion of Council business resumed at approximately 7:15 pm on Thursday January 13th. All members of Council present on the evening of January 12th were present also present on the 13th.

Discussion of 2022 Ministry Spending Plan.

Council reviewed in detail multiple options for the 2022 Ministry Spending Plan. ~~in detail.~~ Bookkeeper Kim Williams had compiled and presented three spending options for review: a moderate spending plan with a 3% raise for staff, a moderate plan with no raise for staff, and a plan for bare minimum spending, including a 3% raise for staff. Council reached a consensus that we should not focus on the moderate spending plan with no raise for staff.

Council discussed whether musicians should be paid as employees, or as 1099 contractors. Council determined that the information needed to understand the correct status for musicians was not at hand, and so did not reach a conclusion.

The MSP variations considered did not include facilities manager as a paid position.

Council concluded that it may be sufficient to budget the custodian position for 10 hours weekly rather than the twelve reflected in all variations of the plan.

The two version of the MSP considered still showed spending exceeding income by 5% to 10%. Council determined that it would be reasonable to assume a 5% increase in giving from 2021 to 2022. Council also agreed to try to generate up to \$20,000 in facilities use income. The Secretary will draft a letter to the Congregation requesting members carefully consider whether they could increase 2022 estimates of giving. The letter will focus on concerns about balancing the spending plan to the detriment of insufficiently funding Christian Education and building maintenance.

A motion was proposed and seconded to direct Pastor Dave and Kim Williams to update the proposed ministry spending plan options based on Council's input and discussion.

A motion was made to make all staff raises effective as of January 1st, 2022. Pastor Dave reported that the numbers reflected in the MSP assumed a start date of January 1st. Additionally, the cost of 3% raises for all staff, excluding Pastor Dave, would ~~cost~~ be about \$1,600 per year. Therefore, removing a single month of those increases would only save about \$133 dollars. The motion passed by acclamation.

Lee Braithwaite noted that offering baskets are not conveniently located. They are at the welcome table at the ~~back of the~~ entrance to the sanctuary where worshipers pick up bulletins and communion packets. Some members feel pressured to gather those items and move away from the table quickly. Placing offering baskets in a location where worshipers have time to find and prepare their offering might be more effective. Lee also suggested a traditional brass offering plate may be more recognizable than a basket. The location of the plates is not

announced at any point during the service. Correcting these issues may lead to an increase in giving on Sunday mornings.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9pm.