

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Congregational Meeting
February 5, 2023

A meeting of the Congregation of Bethel Lutheran Church was held on Sunday February fifth after worship in Fellowship Hall. Approximately 80 members attended the meeting, constituting a quorum for the meeting.

Opening Prayer

Pastor David Young opened the meeting with prayer.

Call to Order

Council President Traci Shoberg called the meeting to order at approximately 10:45 am.

Introduction of Council

Council President Traci Shoberg introduced all other members of the 2023 Congregational Council:

Vice President Rachel Carlson

Treasure Betty Puffinberger

Secretary Bruce Lothrop

Curtiss Grymala

David Look

John Fredericksen

Bryan Davis

Ex-officio member Kim Williams, in her role as Church Administrator

Annual Congregational Report

Pastor David Young referred the Congregation to a written report on Bethel's activities in 2022, which would be available on the Bethel website the following day. Pastor Dave reviewed key points in the report.

Pastor Dave shared Bethel's mission statement ("A community growing deeper in faith and wider in love!") He also shared Bethel's vision statement ("As disciples of Jesus, we strive to live the three-dimensional life of Jesus: UP, IN, and OUT.") "UP" refers to how we, as a community, relate to God. "IN" refers to our ministry with the Bethel community. "OUT" refers to how Bethel serves and relates to our local community, our region, and the world.

Pastor Dave discussed the "Bethel New Day" initiative, which includes large maintenance projects, including roof repair and HVAC repair, as well as a renovation of the Sanctuary.

Pastor Dave introduced the Bethel Staff:

Church Administrator Kim Williams

Director of Music George Donovan

Parish Custodian Patty White
High School Youth Leaders Mel and Kristin Siebert
Parish Nurse Edie McGoff
Nursery Managers Gretchen and Matt Meade
Office Manager Nina Davis
Facilities Manager David Shoberg

Pastor Dave noted that Nina Davis and David Shoberg were new to staff in 2022.

Pastor Dave highlighted the priorities Bethel leadership will pursue in 2023, based on the “Bethel Adapting” process the Congregation entered into in early 2022. Those priorities are:

- Developing diverse income streams to support Bethel’s ministry.
- Developing fellowship and community within Bethel.
- Developing a vibrant seniors ministry.
- Pursuing a “Reconciling in Christ” designation from “Reconciling Works.”

Pastor Dave shared an update on worship attendance in 2022:

Average Sunday Worship attendance was 91 in-person worshippers, and 52 viewing on-line on various platforms during 2022.

Bethel has 151 member households with 307 members. 75 people from 24 households attend Bethel frequently, but are not official members. A total of 382 people from 175 households are active in Worship at Bethel.

Financial Reports

Kim Williams shared financial information from 2022.

Bethel received \$444,663.86 in total giving. A goal for 2023 is to encourage more electronic giving, as electronic giving supports greater consistency in giving, and greater predictability when forming a spending plan.

The 2022 Ministry Spending Plan anticipated \$382,516 in expenses. Actual expenses were \$424,318.24. Of the \$444,664 in income, \$98,690 were gifts for purposes other than operating expenses. Kim emphasized that Bethel will cover expense if giving is focused on the operating budget. Operating expenses in 2022 exceed operating income by \$75,155.61.

Looking Forward

Percentage Giving

Council President Traci Shoberg advocated for members of the community working towards “Percentage Giving” where giving to the Church is defined in terms of a percentage of income, rather than a fixed amount given when attending worship. A common goal is to build toward tithing ten percent of income over time. Barbara Simons shared a personal story of prioritizing giving to Bethel at a time when her income declined. Barbara encouraged members of the community to recognize how they have been blessed, and help to meet Bethel’s basic operating costs. Bethel’s ministry can only flourish if we can pay basic expenses.

New Income Streams

Rachel Carlson discussed ways that Bethel can use our space and grounds to raise funds. The “New Day” initiative is helping to prepare our spaces for new uses. Council will focus on these issues. Rachel invited members of the community to join the efforts and consider taking part in leadership roles if they have ideas to market and use our space in new ways.

Investment in Ministry Team

Betty Puffinberger spoke about opportunities for members of the Bethel Community to make long-term investments in Bethel’s Ministry. She focused on the need to build up a reserve fund for future expenses related to our building and ground maintenance. A team will be forming to plan ways to build such funds. Some suggestions for opportunities to make such investments included listing Bethel as a life-insurance beneficiary, designating gifts while considering estate planning issues, and making gifts from required distributions from retirement plans to gain tax advantages.

Betty invited anyone interested in more discussion to meet with John Fredericksen and herself after worship on February 12th.

Upcoming Events:

Pastor Dave highlighted upcoming events at Bethel

- Bethel will host an informational meeting for the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions for the Northern Shenandoah Valley on Wednesday February 15th. Bethel is a hub for the FACS for the area.
- WATTS week for Bethel is February 18-25.
- A Fat Tuesday dinner will be held on February 21st in Fellowship Hall.
- Ash Wednesday is February 22nd. Bethel will host two services and “Drive Through Ashes.”

Questions

A question was raised about how merchant fees are handled for electronic giving. Kim Williams noted that some forms of electronic giving involve fees taken by the payment processors. Such fees are deducted from the gifts, decreasing the amount Bethel receives. Those fees are considered in the Ministry Spending Plan. Members may increase gifts to cover fees if they choose.

John Gavitt encouraged members to leverage the tax advantages of giving from Required Minimum Distributions from retirement accounts where possible.

Vonda Witt encouraged members of the community who are also members of Thrivent Financial to use “Action Team” funds when possible. Kim Williams referred anyone with questions about Thrivent Action Teams to Barbara Simons and Linda Grymala. Pastor Dave noted that Bethel will host a workshop for Thrivent members to help them understand the process for requesting Thrivent funds.

Council President Traci Shoberg thanked Kathryn Carpenter and Betty Puffinberger for their work on the Sanctuary renovations.

Adjournment

Pastor Dave closed the meeting with prayer. The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:40 am.