

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

COUNCIL Minutes

December 14, 2023

A monthly meeting of the Congregational Council of Bethel Lutheran Church was held on Thursday December 14th at 5:30 pm in the Council Room at the church. Pastor David Young, Council President Traci Shoberg, Vice President Rachel Carlson, Treasurer Betty Puffin Berger, Secretary Bruce Lothrop, David Look, Dustie Fisher, Curtiss Grymala, Brian Davis, John Fredericksen, and Church Administrator Kim Williams were present at the meeting. Rene Hollebrandse, Cherie Lauck, and Lynda Grymala attended as elected members of the 2024 Council. George Donovan Sr. attended as Safety and Security Director and Facilities Manager.

Call to Order

Council President Traci Shoberg called the meeting to order at approximately 5:35.

Opening Devotion and Prayer

Pastor Dave opened the meeting with Prayer.

Consent Agenda Items

The agenda for the meeting, the minutes from the November meeting, and an update on Bethel's actions in pursuit of a "Reconciling in Christ" designation were approved by unanimous acclamation under the consent agenda.

Security & Facility Update

George Sr. provided an update for the Security Team, and for Facilities management.

George reported that he is interviewing candidates for the security team. He is pursuing potential grants through FEMA to pay for security upgrades, such as new lock systems and security cameras.

With regard to facilities, George reported that one restroom near the eastern entrance has been fully converted for gender-neutral use. A locking door that indicates vacant/occupied status and sign indicating single occupant gender-neutral use have been installed.

Staff Updates

No staff updates were submitted.

Pastor's Report

Pastor Dave offered a verbal Pastor's report. Key points in the report were:

- Pastor Dave has performed several baptisms in the past month.
- A class of young elementary aged students are preparing for First Communion on December 17th.
- Progress is being made towards installation of solar panels to defer utility costs.
- The sound and video teams are becoming more comfortable with new equipment and producing better quality streaming video for worship service.
- Pastor Dave is working on plans to renew small group ministries at Bethel.

Financial Reports

Church Administrator Kim Williams distributed detailed financial reports to all members of Council via email prior to the meeting. The reports showed total November income at \$27,196.89, \$3,550 less than anticipated in the Ministry Spending Plan. Total expenses for November were \$27,778, \$5,002 less than expected in the MSP. Expenses for November exceeded income by \$582. Major unexpected expenses were an \$800 charge for color copies and \$1,299 for repairs to an HVAC unit for Mission Hall. The staff was able to minimize other expenses to

avoid a larger loss. Expenses year to date have exceeded income by \$17,228. December is typically the strongest month for giving, so some or all of the shortfall may be made up by year end.

To date, \$157,000 has been pledged in support of the BLC campaign. Kim was unable to determine how much of that total was committed to Phase I or Phase II. The goal for Phase I is to raise \$150,000 by the end of March 2024. The goal for Phase II is to raise an additional \$350,000 by the end of March 2025.

Betty Puffinberger expressed concern about Bethel's ability to pay off the line of credit used for Sanctuary renovation and necessary maintenance on time. \$57,000 would be required to pay off the line of credit. If Bethel does not pay off the line of credit by April 2024, then the lender will likely convert the line of credit to a traditional loan, which may have a higher interest rate.

Fundraising for the Lutheran National Youth Gathering in the summer of 2024 is ongoing.

The financial reports were approved, as presented, by unanimous acclamation

Old Business

- BLC Campaign Update

To date \$157,000 has been pledged to the two phases of the project. The goal is to raise a total of \$500,000 across the two phases, ending in March 2025. Additional communication may be helpful to remind the Congregation of the goal and encourage more participation. In early discussions Sara Smith suggested a thermometer, or similar graphic to keep the goal, and progress towards that goal in front of the Congregation. Rachel Carlson agreed to ask her daughter, Ella, to design and create such a graphic. John Fredericksen agreed to help with supplies.

- Solar Project Update

Jack McAllister and Cory Carlson are investigating options for installing Solar panels on the roof of the Church to defer utilities costs and promote renewable energy. An analysis by MTV Solar produced a plan to provide significant electrical generation capacity for a total cost of \$241,000.00. The planned installation is expected to provide all of Bethel's electric needs at most times of the year, but would likely not provide 100% of needs when running air conditioning throughout the building in the summer. The plan would require a 30% down payment of \$72,285. An anonymous donor has offered to contribute \$168,715 (70% of the cost) to the project. Incentives included in the Inflation Reduction Act could provide a 30% refund on the project. MTV is willing to execute the project in two phases, such that phase one will cost no more than \$168,715. That would allow Bethel to defer any payment until all rebates have been received, and allow the donation and rebates to cover the full cost of the project. Pastor Dave advocated for trying to raise about \$21,000 for the project, which would be approximately equal to the Phase II rebate. That would allow the \$21,000 rebate to be used for other maintenance needs.

MTV projects Solar Renewable Energy Credits could raise up to \$5,000 per year.

Rachel suggested requesting a proposal from ION Solar to determine if there is a better option.

First Presbyterian Church and Market Street United Methodist Church are considering similar projects. If Bethel can combine our project with one or both of those Congregations, then there may be some cost reduction from the original proposal from MTV.

- Other Old Business

There was no other old business.

New Business

- 2024 Fundraisers to be Approved by Council

Kim Williams provided a list of fundraisers that Bethel expects to engage in during 2024, as follows:

- February – WATTS (Diane Milburn)

- February/March – Lenten Food/Gift Card Drive (Karen Shipp)
- May – Bright Futures Food Drive (Sara Smith)
- October – Bright Futures Food Drive (Sara Smith)
- November – Wheels for Wellness Raffle (Karen Shipp)
- December – Advent Food/Gift Card Drive (Karen Shipp)
- December – Global Christmas (Darline DeMott)

Council approved all proposed events by unanimous acclamation. Additional fund-raising events may be approved throughout the year. The youth group expects to launch two fundraisers to support participation in the National Youth Gathering. Council expressed general support for Youth fundraising events, and will vote on any specific proposals when they are received.

- **Comedy Night Proposal**

An area caterer has requested permission to host a Comedy Night in Fellowship Hall on Saturday February 3rd. The caterer has worked at events at Bethel, including Mel and Kristin Siebert's anniversary celebration, and Bob DeMott's birthday party. They have also hosted comedy nights at the club house and Lake Holiday. Kim distributed a written proposal with further details. The hosts would request a license to serve alcohol at the event, which would be provided to Bethel in advance. George Donovan Sr. agreed to attend the event to ensure that any expectations of behavior and cleanup are met. Council requested more clarity about when cleanup would be completed. Since the requested event would take place on a Saturday night, any spaces used should be acceptable for any planned use on the following Sunday morning. No additional trash removal expense is expected. The proposed fee for the use of the space was \$500.00. Members of Council expressed the hope that performers would, within reason, respect the environment. Council members agreed that it would be important to communicate clearly to the Congregation regarding plans and expectations to avoid any misunderstandings about the event. The proposal was approved by unanimous acclamation, as a one-time event. Future proposed events by the same hosts will be considered based on the outcome of the February 3rd event.

- **Confirmation of Trustees**

Sarah Smith, Ron Lauck, and Gary Nichols are currently serving as Bethel Trustees. Trustees' terms are due to be renewed at the February Congregational meeting. Pastor Dave will reach out to current trustees, and request that they continue serving.

- **Shenandoah Montessori Proposal**

The Shenandoah Montessori School is interested in leasing space in the new Sunday School wing at Bethel. Kim Williams shared written information about the request. The request is for use of classrooms 4, 5, and 6, with some storage space in the kitchen. The school requests a sink be installed in one classroom (adjacent to the existing men's room is acceptable), linoleum flooring for easy cleanup, and cleanup/improvements to the playground. The school is willing to discuss shared costs for improvements. The school would like limited use of the library for meetings, and Fellowship Hall for play space during inclement weather. Use would be 8am – 5pm, Monday – Friday during the school year. The proposed fee for use is \$19,500 per year in the first year, with "cost of living" adjustments expected in subsequent years. The school would prefer a multi-year arrangement so that parents may be assured of a consistent location. As the details are still under discussion, no vote was requested. Council noted that accepting the proposal would limit other opportunities to let space, but the consistent income would be helpful.

- **Internship Opportunity**

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary has a candidate for the position of Deacon in the Front Royal area who is in need of a part time internship for two years. The candidate is interested in visitation and ministering to sick and homebound people. She has strong organizational and administrative skills. Bethel would be requested to support the candidate with a stipend of \$500 per month if we choose to host the internship. Council members suggested requesting specific donations to defer a significant portion of the cost to avoid impact on a tight operating budget. The candidate has not been approved by the synod, so no vote was taken.

- Election of 2024 Executive Team & Select Up/In/Out Teams

After discussion, Lynda Grymala was nominated for the office of Treasurer for the 2024 Council year. Lynda was voted to the office of Treasurer by unanimous acclamation. Rachel Carlson was nominated for the office of President of Council for the 2024 Council year, and agreed to serve, if elected. Rachel was voted to the office of President by unanimous acclamation. Brian Davies was nominated to the office of Vice President of Council for the 2024 Council year. Brian was elected to the office of Vice President by unanimous acclamation. After discussion, Cherie Lauck was nominated for the office of Secretary of Council for the 2024 Council year. Cherie was elected to the office of Secretary by unanimous acclamation. The officers of the Council listed above, and office manager Angela (Nina) Davis will be authorized signers on the Operating Account held at First Bank. The officers of Council will also be authorized signers on the Designated and Reserve Accounts held at First Bank.

Pastor Dave described the organization of Council in to Up, In, and Out teams, but indicated that assignments need not be made until the January Council meeting. Pastor Dave encouraged all members of Council to consider which team they felt most called to serve on.

- Development of 2024 Finance Team

Pastor Dave shared plans to create a finance team including Pastor Dave, Kim Williams and members drawn from the Board of Trustees and the Congregational Council.

- Other New Business

Betty asked Kim for more details about the \$800 for color copies. Kim described the arrangement under which the copier is leased. Bethel is allowed a fixed number of color copies, and is billed for color copies in excess of the limit. Kim is exploring options to reduce total costs, or distribute costs more evenly through the year.

Dustie Fisher reported that she had received a bench from the Trex corporation to be installed on Bethel grounds in conjunction with a fire pit that her son, Jerry is constructing as a project in pursuit of his Eagle Scout rank.

Up/In/Out Update Reports

- In Team

Curtiss Grymala reported that the In team raised \$280 after expenses from the first “Third Friday Trivia Night” held in November. Thrivent action cards were used to pay for food and prizes. An additional \$150 was set aside to cover expenses for the December event.

Closing Prayer

Pastor Dave closed the meeting with a prayer.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by motion at approximately 7:15 pm.