

Minutes

Bethel Congregational Meeting February 4, 2024

Meeting called to order by Council President, Rachel Carlson at 10:50 AM

Quorum met with 70 confirmed members in attendance. Handout was provided which included the annual reports from the Pastor, Council President, Council Teams, and the detailed Financial Report.

1. Rachel began with a welcome and thanks to those in attendance.
2. Prayer led by Pastor Dave.
3. Rachel continued with introductions and thanks to staff, volunteers, and council members. Announcement was made that Jennifer LaFollette had agreed to join the council to fill vacancy from Traci Shoberg stepping down.
4. Council updates and focus for 2024 were presented. The four priorities identified by council during their January retreat are:
 - Fellowship - for youth of all ages, seniors, and small groups. Leaders are Brian Davies and Rene Hollebrandse.
 - Communications – enhance internal communications with members while considering how to be inclusive and effective. Leaders are Bruce Lothrop and Cherie Lauck.
 - Engagement – how we stay in relationship with one another to make Bethel happen. Leaders are Betty Puffinberger and John Fredericksen.
 - Financial – looking for ways to diversify and increase income stream while reducing expenses. Leaders are Lynda Grymala and Jennifer LaFollette.
5. Slate of Bethel Trustees for a 5 year term was Sara Smith, Ron Lauck, and Jack McAllister. Motion was made by Curtiss Grymala, seconded by Bruce Lothrop, and accepted by acclamation.
6. Explanation, progress, and goals of BLC Campaign (Phase 1 and Phase 2) were provided. Priorities for Phase 1 are to pay down the credit line and replenish operating shortfalls incurred during 2023. Donations for Phase 1 have reached 65% of pledges. Phase 2 focus will be debt reduction and capital improvements. Immediate needs are two HVAC units for the Underground. Future improvements needed in Fellowship Hall include HVAC units (over 20 years old), paint, and carpet. Extending the paved parking area is also a capital improvement goal. There have been no donations received for Phase 2. Attractive display for showing progress of fundraising will be in place soon.
7. Recent step towards saving money was made with changes to our color copier and contract. Thanks was expressed to staff for their time and efforts in researching the cost saving options.
8. Re-cap of the New Day Initiative (sanctuary renovations) which began in April 2022 was provided. Total cost was \$524,928.00. Total bank debt as of 2/1/24 is \$571,579.00, which includes debt balance before renovations.

9. Financial report overview was provided including breakdowns of donation income, distribution of donated funds, expenditures, and a monthly giving trends graph.
10. Betty Puffinberger explained many of Bethel's ministries are supported by Thrivent Action Team cards and encouraged Thrivent members to maximize use.
11. An anonymous donation of \$175,000.00 for Bethel's solar project was received and accepted by council in January. The donation will cover 100% of the Phase 1 Solar installation which should begin in April. Once completed and online (which will take several months) immediate savings in utility expenses will be seen. The government rebate of 30% of Phase 1 costs will be used toward Phase 2 of the solar project. Hopefully, Phase 2 Solar can happen this year. Bethel spent between \$17,000-18,000 on electricity last year and the solar project will save approximately 95% of that.
12. Shenandoah Montessori School is most likely coming to Bethel and will be using ½ the classrooms in the fellowship hall wing beginning summer 2024. They will look to expand as enrollment increases. Income from rent is a flat rate and guaranteed regardless of use. The lease agreement is for three years with an option to renew.
13. Bethel has offered to host an intern for two years who is a candidate for the position of Deacon. If invitation is accepted the intern would work 10 hours per week beginning the summer of 2024. Intern would focus on senior ministry, fellowship, and assisting with administration. Cost to Bethel would be \$500.00 per month.
14. National Youth Gathering will be held July 15 – July 20 in New Orleans and Bethel will be sending 5 youth (possibly 6) and 3 chaperones.
15. Pastor Dave spoke about the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) process and handouts were given to all in attendance. Eventually the congregation will be asked to vote on a RIC Welcome Statement.
16. Rachel expressed thanks to the congregation for allowing council to lead. There are plans to restart coffee with council to enhance accessibility and information sharing.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:40AM