

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH
CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING
March 19, 2020

Called to order by Robin Kvalo at 6:35pm.

Attendance:

Jack Paulson-Zoom
Ann Ciske-Zoom
Halley Harms-Zoom
Robin Kvalo
Pastor Jen Johnson-Zoom
Ruth Price-Zoom
Kory Anderson
Geoff Gilbert-Zoom
Don Bender
Carla Gerhardt-Zoom (Worship and Music Report)
Janice Petersen-Zoom (Financial Committee Report)

Prayer by Pastor Jen

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion by Ann Ciske, second by Halley Harms to approve the proposed agenda. Motion Carried.

APPROVAL OF THE February MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Geoff Gilbert, second by Jack Paulson to approve the December meeting minutes as submitted. Motion Carried.

Pastor's Report

Greetings beloved in Christ,

As I type this first line I realize how weary I am of beginning with, "In our current situation with restrictions on our face to face gatherings." However, it looks like this will be how things are for only God knows how long.

I am actually filled with hope right now.

Together, in just a couple of days we have listened to God for how we can still be connected in a time of social distancing. With the mad skills of Justice Oh we have a livestream set-up for worship that is better than anyone had ever dreamed possible. I will take a photo of the set-up he devised and share it with you.

Halley has offered a connection opportunity with the confirmation kids and their mentors for Wednesday nights. Beginning this week the kids are invited to join in on Zoom so they can share their high and lows at least, and at the best, come together as the Body of Christ in the community that is so vital for them.

Janice, Ann, and I are implementing a caring ministry that is an expansion of the work that Janice and I have been doing already. Janice has set up a Google spreadsheet with the names and phone numbers of everyone in our church family that is 70 and older and/or has a medical condition that makes them

especially vulnerable to illness. I am making the initial contact with each person or household. In this contact (phone, text, Messenger) I am checking in on spiritual and physical conditions. I'm also finding out if they have access to groceries, medicine, and household supplies. I also let them know that if they would have the need, that someone from BLC would be available to pick up and deliver any necessities (they'd pay for their stuff and someone would bring it to them). Additionally, I'm checking to see if they have access to our online worship.

I've been keeping in close communication with my colleagues in our Columbia-Sauk Conference of the synod. We've been upholding one another in prayer and sharing stories of how we're navigating these new waters of being church. We're quickly learning that together we can come up with strategies in our contexts to best reach our parishioners and communities that are faithful, effective, and meaningful in Christ.

Now, to protect you and to do our part to "flatten the curve" we now have the option to meet via Zoom. Over the weekend I upgraded my free version to the Pro version. This will allow us to meet for longer than the free version allows, which is only 40 minutes.

If you need a free Zoom application for your smartphone, tablet, laptop, or desktop computer, download the application. If you need to go directly to their website, the web address is www.zoom.us.

I will send each of you the connection information in a separate email. This email will have all you need to connect.

If you are having difficulties connecting, feel free to call me 1-608-485-3976.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee Report

In attendance: *Pr. Jen, Jerry Saalsaa, Janice Petersen, Tania Anderson*

1. Activity/Fundraising Calendar:

We are working toward creating an activities/fundraising calendar for the 2020/2021 year. Janice is having to take money from savings during the January & February months, as we have had to do in previous years, and we need to consider planning a fellowship/fundraising event during this time. We also need to pay attention to the summer time months and try to replace the Adopt-a-bill with fellowship/fundraising activities. This will be an on-going project involving all of the committees to determine the activities for the upcoming year. Tania will speak with Megan/the youth group to coordinate their fundraising calendar. Some fellowship/fundraising ideas that have been suggested so far: concerts, summer carnival, shrimp boil, etc.

1. Financial Update:

We had a difficult January and February, similar to the previous years. However, Jan-Mar 2019 we experienced a \$21,000 loss. In Jan-Mar 2020, we have only experience a \$3,000 loss. This is better than we anticipated, and we look forward to the stability that Lent brings.

Robin Kvalo will be taking Tim Kratz's role as a check signer. She and Don Bender will have authority to sign checks as we move forward.

1. Financial Controls Manual:

Will be updating a couple of small changes; title changes, etc.

1. Mortgage Refinancing:

Current Mortgage background-

- Current Mortgage Interest Rate & Terms 3.875% locked in until July 2020, variable annually thereafter.
- Mortgage Balance is \$892,941
- Current mortgage payment - \$5,983 Monthly/ \$71,796 Annually
- Loan Certificate balance owed -\$201,000
 - Of the Loan Certificate - \$143,000 has not been designated to the church upon passing creating a risk of unplanned certificate redemptions.
 - Of the \$201,000 balance owed, BLC only has \$18,569.75 in certificate reserves to pay for any requested redemption.
 - Current Loan Certificate interest paid annually - \$6,200 (Note: BLC Building Savings fund has \$72,501 balance)

Refinancing Option #1: Mission Invest Fund - through the ELCA, has suggested that we see what Thrivent says first

Refinancing Option #2: Thrivent presented the following terms to Janice:

- They will increase the current loan balance of \$892,941 by \$143,000 to an overall \$1,035,941 to cover the loan certificates that have not been given to church upon death
- The term of the loan will remain the same and end 9-14-2043
- Interest rate will be 3.95%, with a 7-year ARM
- We would need to have a broker's valuation opinion on the building since the loan would go over \$1,000,000; the church would be responsible for paying for this.
- We also have to pay closing costs of about \$9429.41
- They do not want us to make any more loans to our members. No more loan certificates.
- They are concerned about the status of the church (as we are) and concerned that our attendance has dropped and what our future is. We explained the renewal process and that we are looking to reinvigorate our congregation.
- The Thrivent representative estimated that our payment would go down about \$300/ mo; \$5,657 Monthly/ \$67,884 Annually
- The proposed closing date is May, 8th however due to CONVID-19 and Holy week they have agreed to move back the closing date.

Audit Committee

Met March 9th

January-December 2019. The financial reports appear to be all correct. All processes appear to be in place. Additional work is recommended in the following areas:

- Record the bank draft number on the physical statement
- The audit was clean and easy using the quickbook system.

A motion by Don Bender, second by Kory Anderson to accept the audit committee as presented.
Motion Carried.

Action Items:

#1: We are recommending that council **approve** the estimate to refinance through Thrivent under the current terms/agreement that they have presented; the forms will need to be signed and a \$500 deposit will need to be sent on **Friday, March 20th.**

Further communication is needed from Thrivent regarding council concerns that the payment of \$8929 in closing fees would not be refunded in the case the the congregation does not vote in favor of the refinance. We understand that the \$500 hold to secure the refinance is non-refundable. Janice will communicate with Thrivent asking for a later approval date due to the current circumstance of not being able to meet in person to vote.

#2: We ask that a date is set for a congregational meeting, via Zoom/video conferencing (with a quorum), to formally approve the refinancing of the loan and to approve closing the loan certificate program. The \$201,000 of loan certificates will then be paid out in the following ways:
 As things progress during these unprecedented times, we will explore opportunities for congregation members to vote.

\$143,000 from Thrivent loan

\$18,569.75 from the loan certificate reserve fund

- \$48,859.66 from the Building Fund (**Leaving a Balance of approximately \$23,641.74 in the savings account**)

#3: Prior to the congregational meeting, all of the loan certificate holders should be notified, individually, about what council & the Finance Committee have proposed. Representative from council & the Finance Committee will be assigned to make these calls.

The finance committee will need to reach out to those loan certificate holders to see if they are willing to accept a certain portion of the certificate back or it will need to be paid back in full. There are currently 14 loan certificates.

Christian Education Committee Report

If the River Haven's Bowl-a-thon is not cancelled for April 4th, Megan is asking for the church to help put some money towards the \$15/person entry fee. She has 3 teams of ___ kids signed up. Council assumed that this event will be cancelled due to COVID-19 and the gathering number policies.

Confirmation Zoom meeting scheduled for Wednesday's 7-7:30. An email went out to families. If they didn't receive it please have them email: youthfamblc@gmail.com and I will get them the login info.

Stewardship & Evangelism Committee Report

No report received

Worship & Music Committee Report

Carla was present during the meeting via zoom to discuss the possibility of a digital hymnal in the case where she isn't available to play. The cost of the digital hymnal is \$2500.00 along with a year warranty. Pastor Dave, is willing to come to BLC to provide a demonstration. There is no renewal price. If you want to buy additional hymnals, there would be additional costs. Licensing is included in the cost. Carla doesn't feel the need for the digital hymnal is time sensitive. David Yerke has offered to fill in if needed as well as Rhana Pait. Given the current circumstances, Carla will arrange for Pastor Dave to attend with a demonstration once council meetings are able to resume in person.

At this time, there have been no applications for a new music leader. Carla has the current ability to play and record songs on the organ to be played if needed.

Property Committee Report

The schedules on all of the thermostats have been reset to correlate with the new church schedule to save money on heating costs.

The light fixture at the Admin entrance was replaced with a new LED fixture. The ballast on the old fixture failed. The new fixture has a 5.5 year life span and uses only 14 watts of power. Total cost \$24.00.

Local & Global Committee Report

The Local and Global committee did not meet formally in March, but we have all talked with each other during the month. The April 19th Earth Day clean up at the church and on Highway 33 is postponed until further notice. We have decided that we will not start any visits to the nursing homes at this time due to Covid-19.

APPROVAL OF THE COMMITTEE REPORTS

Motion by Ann Ciske , second by Geoff Gilbert to approve the committee reports as submitted.
Motion Carried.

NEW BUSINESS

- Covid-19 Update & Plan-
- A. Ministerial Outreach- Pastor Jen and Janice have been reaching out to members over the age of 80 or with vulnerable medical conditions. All members at this point have stated that they have someone to help them with their needs. Janice and Jen will begin to reach out to members 70 and above at this point. It will be mentioned in the newsletter ways to contact the church of Pastor Jen of any needs made. It was discussed to reach those members that don't have email via phone tree or a written note sent in the mail. Halley will offer the opportunity for BLC youth to send letters to those unable to leave their homes. Pastor Jen suggested that due to Kris Soderman's going away party being cancelled, we mail cards to BLC and Julie will send out a package of cards to her once she's arrived.
- B. Facebook Live – Virtual Church
Pastor Jen is on a 14-day quarantine. Mark Teslik has been asked to fill in. Robin will be giving a message thanking Kris for her years of service. Robin will pick up wind-chimes from the Edgewater Greenhouse as a gift of thanks from council. A message regarding financial giving

and the importance that as a church we continue our generosity and supporting God's work will be given by Robin on Sunday 3/22. An offering of approximately \$5,000 is given via Simply Giving, however \$19,000 is typical in offerings during services. The focus on Sunday services going virtual will be the main priority at this point. If restrictions contribute

C. Paypal account approval

Paypal charges 2.3% for 503C's. This provides another opportunity for members to give electronically if they don't want to set-up a continuous donation. The only times this was previously used was for the rummage sale and the Gifts of Bethlehem program.

A motion made by Halley Harms, second by Jack Paulson to approve the use of Paypal for offerings and large payments that need to be made to the church.

D. Holy Week

Due to COVID-19, it is assumed that Holy Week will need to be done virtually. Easter Sunday service will be the only service to take place. First Communion will need to be postponed. If the restrictions on attendance continue too long, a virtual First Communion class will be put together. Ginny Paulson will verify that the Easter Lilies and delivery is still possible.

Thrivent Giving Account

Robin was presented with a phone call from Marj Margolowski that \$100 from the Thrivent Giving Account be put towards 2020 VBS program.

A motion by Ann Ciske, second by Kory Anderson to put \$100 from the Thrivent Giving account towards VBS be made. Motion Carried.

Closed session began 8:09

Motion by Don Bender, second by Jack Paulson to adjourn the meeting at 8:27pm. Motion Carried.

Next Finance Committee Meeting: April 7?

All Committee Night: May 11

Next Council Meeting: April 16