

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH  
CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING  
May 21, 2020  
Meeting held via Zoom due to COVID-19

Called to order by Robin Kvalo at 6:33pm.

Attendance:

Jack Paulson-Zoom  
Ann Ciske-Zoom  
Halley Harms-Zoom  
Robin Kvalo-Zoom  
Pastor Jen Johnson-Zoom  
Ruth Price-Zoom  
Kory Anderson-Zoom  
Geoff Gilbert-Zoom  
Don Bender- Zoom  
Janice Petereson- Zoom  
Julie Saalsaa - Zoom

Prayer by Pastor Jen

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion by Ann Ciske, second by Geoff Gilbert to approve the proposed agenda. Motion Carried.

APPROVAL OF THE April MEETING MINUTES

Motion by Geoff Gilbert , second by Kory Anderson to approve the April meeting minutes as submitted. Motion Carried.

Pastor's Report

My report for the council meeting is my summary of a Zoom meeting with Bishop Peter Rogness and Rostered Leaders and laity of our synod. The meeting took place Thursday, May 14, 2020 at 7:00 pm. Bishop Rogness began the meeting with information and counsel from his Office and concluded with a Q & A time with participants.

The meeting has been recorded and will be available if you want to view it. These and other resources are available on the synod website, [www.scsw-elca.org](http://www.scsw-elca.org)

**Four Points  
Addressed**

- 1. Who do we listen to?**
- 2. What plans do we make?**

3. **What does return look like?**
4. **What are the long-term implications of our decision?**

1. Who do we listen to?
  - a. From where are we getting our information upon which we are making our decisions and whom do we trust?
  - b. How do we make decisions based upon the information?

***We need to be consulting sources based upon objective, scientific data and information. CDC, Wisconsin Department of Health, Wisconsin Council of Churches, Badger Bounce Back, ELCA***

***We then study these documents together and base our decisions upon the data and information in light of the gospel***

2. What plans do we make?
  - a. Study the documents and base our discussions from them.
  - b. Realize we will be living with the reality of COVID-19 in our midst for at least a year or two.
  - c. Specific decisions, if they go against the current recommendations, must be done in consultation with an attorney and our insurance company. (Legal liability and withholding coverage possibilities)
3. What does return look like?
  - a. Even though the Safer at Home order is rescinded, the Badger Bounce Back and the included phases are still operative.
  - b. We are currently in Phase 1, where we shall have 10 or fewer people gather, with recommended precautions in place at all times.
  - c. There is NO SAFE WAY to join in the Eucharist in person.
  - d. Singing is an unsafe practice, as are unison readings and prayers.
  - e. When we do eventually return, practice the procedures before the actual worship service.
  - f. The official recommendation from the Bishop is to continue online, livestream worship.
  - g. When do we reopen?
    - i. First ask, "Why are we reopening?"
    - ii. Second, determine "How will we reopen?"
    - iii. Finally, "When will we reopen?"

***We must not succumb to pressure to reopen that is counter to our resources.***

4. What are the long-term implications of our current decisions?
  - a. Be mindful that any decisions made now will have a lasting impact upon the future decisions and actions of the congregation.

**Our focus in our practice is ABOUT THE CARE OF OTHERS**

**Question and Answer Time with Bishop Peter Rogness:**

1. What are the benchmarks for resuming home visits?

- Right now, home visits are not recommended. None given.

2. Is unison prayer and liturgy a dangerous practice? What are the recommendations for the Creed and the Lord's Prayer?

-The louder we speak, the more we project and spread airborne viruses. The recommendation is for quiet, contemplative services if we are to do so in person, with no communion or singing.

3. What about drive-in worship? Is there a safe way to share the Lord's Supper?

-No.

4. How do we take communion while wearing masks? (Rhetorical)

5. Who is the enforcer if some are not following the "rules"?

-NOT THE PASTOR.

6. What if someone says they do not want to wear a mask, or follow other set precautions?

-If someone doesn't want to abide by the set precautions of the congregation, then that person must communicate to the community beforehand their choice to not comply, so that those who wish to avoid the risk being posed can stay home.

7. What about wearing a mask while speaking?

-If a person (pastor, reader) is speaking and is in the pulpit of the chancel it is permissible to be unmasked while speaking.

Rev. Jen Johnson

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Finance Committee Report

#### **1. Financial Update & Chimes**

People have been mailing in their offerings for April. Even without the \$20,000+ balance of the PPP loan, we are paying the bills and staying ahead of things. The P&L from this time of year 2019 and 2020 is comparable. Jan-April 2019 financials showed a loss of \$3,650. Jan-April 2020 shows a profit of \$4500, which shows that 2020 has brought us more stability, despite the current COVID-19 pandemic. Pr. Jen will continue to make announcements/reminders for mailing in offerings. Janice will create financial summaries to submit to council, and will also create the mini P&L form to submit to the Chimes.

#### **2. Mortgage Refinance Update**

The papers for refinancing that needed to be signed have been signed. Del is filling out an environmental form that is also needed. The broker opinion is being handled. All of the paperwork should be completed and submitted soon. Update as of 5/21: They will be giving us less and reducing closing costs based on the value of the building not being valued as high as initially thought. A new commitment letter will be sent after the holiday with a June 15th closing date

### 3. Loan Certificate Holders Program Update

All of the letters are back from the loan certificate holders . We estimate that we will have a total of \$112,500 to payout, \$18,500 will be donated back to the church, and \$70,000 will be used to create an endowment. Upon closing and distributing the payout to loan certificate holders, we will need to also pay the final interest payment.

### 4. Financial Controls Manual

We will be creating some guidelines for purchases and reimbursements and will define the role of the Finance committee, staff, and volunteers in that process. Because Jerry Saalsaa, our current Treasurer, is a volunteer that mainly provides oversight, strategy and financial support, we may need to consider how to properly distribute all of the financial responsibilities. Because of this, we will be reviewing the Financial Controls Manual and may modify a few things, if necessary. Council will be updating the Constitution & Bylaws this year, so this is a good time for this review.

The committee discussed Janice's role possibly needing two titles, Parish Nurse and \_\_?\_\_. John suggested creating a separate job description so that it could eventually be separated out to someone else, if necessary, in the future. Janice is going to think about some titles for this. This is a dual role right now because we have an unpaid volunteer Treasurer; in the future a paid Treasurer would cover the other job responsibilities. We will review this and discuss again at the next meeting.

Check signers: The committee discussed whether or not Denise should be able to sign checks. It would be nice to have someone that is at the church more often have the ability to sign checks.

~~John D. made a motion to recommend that Denise be authorized by council to sign checks; Don seconded the motion. **Motion carried**~~

**UPDATE:** Post-meeting: Because of what is recommended for the separation of duties for accounting controls, Jerry Saalsaa recommends against Denise having check signing authority. We will strike from this summary and discuss it again at our next meeting.

### Christian Education Committee Report

Until this week I was prepared to present you with the idea of having "Faith Formation" night on Wednesday's for all grade levels/adults, but under the current circumstances we are moving our focus to how we can support and encourage faith practices within homes.

### **Current Practices:**

#### Confirmation Age

We have been having weekly Zoom meetings. I have sent out a couple messages with Bible passages ahead of time and then we discuss for a brief time some of the discussion questions but really focus more on staying connected and supporting one another.

#### High School Age

Megan is leading this weekly and doing similar things as the confirmation group.

### **Going forward:**

We need to shift our focus on how to support families and provide faith learning experiences for youth and their families. Pastor Jen brought the following talking points to our Faith Formation Committee on 5/19/20:

- Encouraging and equipping families for faith formation in the home.
- Equipping families as they learn and grow together in Christ.
- Connecting families to one another.
- Connecting Faith Formation to the community beyond.
- Phasing this into our life when we can gather again.

After meeting with the Faith Formation Committee we have come up with the following:

- To reach out to families with preschool-elementary aged children Jeanette and Tania will be putting together a “summer fun” kit and look at materials we currently have to send to families
- We discussed a weekly/every other week mailing to families providing them with an activity to complete together.
- This could be a time to bring back sponsoring an animal through the World Hunger Organization or ELCA God’s Gifts.
- Pastor Jen has access to “Journey Together” a 12 week program through Spark House digital. We currently already have access to that and would not be any additional expense. We can look through that and pick out portions that families could complete.
- Megan will continue to meet weekly as able via Zoom with the H.S. students
- Confirmation mentors will alternate hosting weekly Zoom meetings with the M.S. students
- All events, including the Confirmation Retreat in the fall have been cancelled

#### Stewardship & Evangelism Committee Report

No report received

#### Worship & Music Committee Report

No report received

#### Property Committee Report

Utility billing and usage continue to approach record lows for March and April with the trend expected to continue through May.

Jerry continues to do maintenance inside the building while Dick Olson, Del Molden and others work on the gardens and the lawn upkeep.

#### Local & Global Committee Report

During the month of April the local and global committee called congregation members age 70 and above to check on them during the pandemic. We will continue to call in May and be part of a larger group calling all congregation members.

#### APPROVAL OF THE COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Motion by Don Bender , second by Jack Paulson to approve the committee reports as submitted. Motion Carried.**

## New Business

### Wisconsin Council of Churches and Synod plans to reopen church

Janice brought up a discussion based on feedback from members she's called to check in that there needs to be a plan to re-open when the criteria has been met to safely return. Other feedback brought up was that it is preferred that Pastor Jen returns to the physical Church on Sundays vs. her home. Pastor feels strongly that only the bare minimum of bodies are present in the church. It is suggested Pastor, Melissa and Justice be present and potentially Carla. This would allow safe social distancing. There are other forms of digital music that can be used if Carla doesn't feel comfortable being present. Pastor will be creating a working document of what Reopening would look like in stages with the understanding that it is a working document and needs to be flexible. The return of church staff in the building will be included in this plan.

### Request by Megahn Jahoda to hold a parking lot youth group event

Based on the guidelines and recommendations from the Health Department and the Council of churches we feel it's best to wait until we are in phase one which Pastor Jen is creating. We as a council will present this plan when it has been completed.

### Mowing of the property

Dick Olson communicated there is a need to get a couple of people to help on a consistent basis to mow since Bob has passed.

Kory and Tania Anderson are going to take on this role and have other volunteers they can reach out to if necessary.

**Motion by Geoff Gilbert second by Jack Paulson to adjourn the meeting at 7:42pm . Motion Carried.**

Next Finance Committee Meeting: June 2

All Committee Night: August 10

Next Council Meeting: June 18