

## Faith Lutheran Congregational Meeting Minutes

December 11, 2022

Meeting called to order at 9:55am – Jim Sheldon

**Opening Prayer** – Pastor Derek Harkins

**Secretary's Report** – Mark Schneider

Call for corrections or additions to the May 15, 2022, Congregational Meeting Minutes was made. None were heard.

**Avis Pederson made a motion to approve the Congregational Meeting Minutes as distributed.** Motion was seconded by Allen Dockter. **Motion approved.**

**Pastor's Report** – Pastor Derek Harkins

Grace and peace to you, sisters and brothers!

In other congregations I have served the Annual meetings would fall in January or February. I have come to love that Faith Lutheran does ours in December. It is a busy crazy time to pull together our agenda items and hold the meeting, but holding our meeting during the Advent season seems right in many ways. The themes of Advent are anticipation, waiting, and of course preparation. John the Baptist is a key figure every Advent season because he was the one prophesied in Isaiah as the one crying out in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." In many ways that's what we are here right now to do. To pray, discern, and make decisions for how best Faith Lutheran Church of Bismarck can prepare the way of the Lord.

After all that is what Faith Lutheran Church has been doing the last 76 years and what our focus has been on this last year as we try to live out the mission that God has called us to. Our mission of "building a welcoming, nurturing faith community that is guided by Jesus and shares the Gospel" has been the compass for our decision making, our goal setting, our prayers, and our hopes as we continue to prepare the way of the Lord.

We have lived this mission out through regular worship as a community, through celebrating love through Weddings, holding one another in our grief during funerals, rejoicing at new life through many baptisms, and by prayer and support of new confirmands as they affirm their baptismal promises. We are most certainly building a welcoming, nurturing faith community. This year we have completed major goals of updating our Constitution and Bylaws, creating a Large Gift Policy, revitalizing many of our Task Groups that make up our Compass Group, and successfully completing the "The Love your Neighbor Campaign" for furnishing the new chapel at Missouri Slope Lutheran Care Center of over \$22,000 and most recently completed our own "Growth in Giving" campaign where we asked the congregation to prayerfully consider raising their own general giving for the mission of the church. Thank you so much to all of our

members who continually help me see Christ at work through your generosity of all the many gifts that God has given you.

We have had several staffing changes this last year with the retirement of Randy as our Building Supervisor and Donna as our Communications Assistant. We also are planning on the upcoming retirement of Lisa who has served Faith Lutheran for 29 years on staff. We look forward to celebrating her time with us and her retirement in February. Due to all these changes, Executive Committee called a Staff Evolution task group together to assess the staffing needs of Faith Lutheran. This was very beneficial and resulted in the hire of a new building supervisor in Kim Zimmerman and a shifting of Job descriptions and responsibilities for Cheryl along with the hire of a new Administrative Assistant in Caitlyn Angermeyer. We will also be transitioning our membership database and accounting from Shepherd Staff to Icon which will help Cheryl as well as the organization of our members and efficiency for staff. I am so incredibly grateful for the staff that we have. From Pastor Sylvia, to Cheryl, to Kim and Caitlyn, to Lisa, to Janine, to Kenny, they are a joy to work with and have a passion for God's work and the mission of Faith Lutheran. They are truly a gift and I hope you all tell them thank you for the amazing work that they do.

I am excited for what God has in store for us this next year. It will hold challenges without a doubt. With increasing inflation and cost of living we find ourselves struggling to keep up with our expenses. We thank you for your response to this challenge and hope that you continue to look for ways you might increase your generosity. Money isn't the only challenge either, but more so involvement. We are always in need of volunteers and ways we can be more involved together as a community, whether it is involving our children and youth more, or connecting small groups and families, or doing service work in the community. We look for ways in the coming years to strengthen and grow our community...to build a welcoming, nurturing faith community that is guided by Jesus and shares the Gospel.

As always, it is an honor to serve you as pastor! I am blessed to get to "Prepare the way of the Lord" with all of you!

In Christ,

Pastor Derek

**Pastor's Report** – Pastor Sylvia

Friends in Christ, grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

It is my 6th advent here at FLC, and I continue to be so grateful for each of you and our ministry together. 2022 was a big year for us - a year of transitioning back to some sort of normal. I am so deeply grateful for our staff, both old and new. It is a joy to serve with each of them and to share in the everyday ins and outs of life together in this community. I am especially grateful for Pastor Derek and the chance to share in this calling together.

Your leaders in this community are amazing - people with gifts and vision and deep faith. Dear children of God who give of themselves: their time, abilities, and energy to listen carefully where God is leading and work to shepherd this community into the future. Working closely with them is one of the greatest joys of ministry here. If you don't already, I encourage you to get to know them better and share with them your ideas and visions for our community.

Much of my work this past year has been work of rebuilding and revisioning: putting ministry teams and events back together after the disruption of the pandemic. Missions Task Group has been working on developing a mission focus for each month and clearly communicating these needs from partner ministries throughout our community. Make sure to keep an eye on the bulletin, newsletter, and website for information on how we are responding to these needs. Worship and Music Task Group worked on setting up new worship teams, inviting people to participate in shared worship leadership. We had an amazing response - thank you!!!! It has been so fun and joyful to learn and lead together.

We were able to return to Badlands Ministries for our 8th grade confirmation retreat with a wonderful group of students. Our young people are so thoughtful, gifted, and hilarious! We are loving being back again with them and our 8th graders this fall for confirmation, along with three amazing small group leaders and a wonderful group of adult mentors. Our focus this year is on the promises of baptism, so each week we focus on one of the five promises: live among God's faithful people, hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper, proclaim the good news of Christ in word and deed, serve all people following the example of Jesus, and strive for justice and peace in all the earth. We think about what this promise means for our lives, how we live it out, and we connect it with Bible stories that help us understand it through the example of people of faith who came before us.

Our Wednesday adult Bible study group has studied a wide range of topics, from the life of Martin Luther to the Gospel of Luke. A small group also met on Monday evenings to study Rachel Held Evans' book *Searching for Sunday*. Great discussion, learning, and growing in faith and relationship happen in these groups, and we encourage you to join as you are able!

This year has also been a year of learning opportunities for me. I completed a 3-year grant-funded leadership cohort for pastors, and enjoyed a 10-day pilgrimage trip to the Holy Land, which I hope to share more about later this winter. The congregation also supported me in receiving a month of my sabbatical leave early, which I used for reading and rest. I will take the remaining two months of sabbatical this summer. I also began serving as President of the board of Camp of the Cross Ministries, which has been a challenging and wonderful learning experience. Thank you for your support of me in this role and of our shared ministry at camp.

Personally, 2022 was a major year for me: I got married and bought a house! From the bottom of my heart: thank you for all the well-wishes and support for me and Seth as we started this part of our life together. It has meant the world.

On this third Sunday of Advent, we usually reflect on JOY at the coming of Christ. Thank you for sharing your joys and cares with me. Thank you for the joy you bring to my life and life in this community. As we look together to the year ahead, I invite you to reflect on the joy you find in this ministry God has entrusted to us, the joy you find in each other, and the joy you experience through God's love, mercy, and grace. As Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians: Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

God's Spirit is alive and at work in you, dear people of God. And for that most astonishing and abundant gift of grace, let us rejoice.

#### **Treasurer's Report** – Matthew Nygard

Matthew mentioned that November's giving came in higher than expenses, but that our year-to-date giving came in under our expenses. The 2023 offering to date is \$434,583.63, expenses came to \$468,085.96, with a shortfall of \$33,502.33. We have reserves/savings to cover the shortfall; however, we don't want to keep spending from that reserve. The "Growth in Giving" Campaign will hopefully get our budget back on track for the coming year. There was discussion and Norbert Mayer mentioned tax free IRAs as an option. Matthew mentioned additional giving options other than envelopes including online giving and direct giving through monthly paycheck withdrawals.

**Norbert Mayer made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report.** Motion was seconded by Jim Eslinger. **Motion approved.**

#### **Mission Statement Review** – Jim Sheldon

Jim read our mission statement, "We are building a welcoming, nurturing faith community that is guided by Jesus and shares the Gospel." No changes to the mission statement were suggested.

#### **2023 Leadership Position Elections** – Steve Sundvor and Jim Sheldon

Steve thanked the nominating committee and presented the lists of nominees for *Executive Committee* (Vice Chair – Amy Steiner, Treasurer – Matthew Nygard), *Compass Group* (Preschool/Elem. Ed. – Shanna Brady, Learning Resources Center – LeAnn Severson, Stewardship – Shawna Capan, Evangelism and Fellowship – Open), and *Endowment Committee* (Robin Schumacher, Doug Johnson, Jessica Hardy, Aaron Isaak, Carolyn Brunner). **Dave Andersen made a motion to approve the Nominees.** Motion was seconded by Roberta Modin. **Motion approved.**

#### **2023 Budget – Consideration and Approval** – Matthew Nygard

Matthew explained the planned budget for 2023 and answered questions. Allen Dockter wanted the congregation to know that Cheryl will be taking on other responsibilities and that the church's new financial software "ICON" will help with money management, payroll, and bank account streamlining. **A motion was made by Ray Utter to accept the 2023 Budget,** seconded by Dave Andersen, and **approved by vote.**

**New Business** – Congregation

Jim Eslinger asked how many current “baptized” members there were in our church and Pastor Derek estimated approximately 1,600 members. Mercy Carkuff confirmed that we have taken quite a few members off the list during the last couple years. Norbert Mayer expressed concern about “at home” members living in private homes and whether a visitation team would be a solution to connect with them. Pastor Derek talked about the formation of a congregational life committee that would include visitation. Lastly, regarding updates to our church directory, Colleen Preszler will be exploring options and working towards a revised edition.

**Closing Prayer** – Pastor Sylvia

The meeting was adjourned by Jim Sheldon at 10:42am.