

## CONGREGATION COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Oak Harbor, Ohio  
September 19, 2023, 7:00 pm

*"To Enthusiastically Share the Love of Jesus Christ  
through our Thoughts, our Words, and our Compassionate Actions."*

### **COUNCIL BIBLE STUDY/INTENTIONAL PRAYER SESSION – 6:30**

- Devotions and Prayer in the Sanctuary led by Pastor Becky-”The Lord’s Prayer”

**CALL TO ORDER:** Clark Price called the meeting to order. Present were: Pastor Becky Bolander, Clark Price, Chelle Blausey, Gail Browning, Karen Demangos, Cindy Kline, Traci Riechman, Mike Harder, Mike Overmyer, Amanda Moore, and Thomas Rhodes.

Excused: Tom Paule and Scott Gluth

Guest: Sarah Hartigan

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:** Thomas Rhodes made a motion to approve the September 19, 2023, Congregation Council Meeting Minutes and Mike Overmyer seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**TREASURER’S REPORT:** The report was reviewed by the council and required no further action as a result of council discussion except as recorded in these minutes and are hereby made part of the minutes as copies in the record.

Chelle stated that there was a final balance of \$5,985.23 from the Audio/Visual Sound System project funds that was transferred to the Capital Improvement Fund. Mike Harder made a motion to approve the August 2023 Treasurer’s Report and Cindy Kline seconded the motion. Motion carried.

### **SPECIAL AGENDA ITEM:**

- Nominating Committee’s Initial Presentation of November Election Ballot: Linda Kohlman and Liz Zelms from the nominating committee presented the draft ballot for the Annual Meeting on November 13, 2023. The committee is still looking for a candidate for Secretary and for Treasurer of the council. The council will approve the ballot at the October 2023 meeting. The council had no concerns with the candidates presented on the initial ballot.

**PASTOR’S REPORT:** Pastor Becky presented the report. She talked about the Art’s Grant and our collaboration with the Port Clinton Art’s Garage. Events planned so far are October 28 and 29, 2023, there will be window panes for painting during the worship service. There will be a kick-off event on December 2, 2023, 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M. at the church with artists present and something for people to get involved in creating. The parsonage can be used for some of the art projects as well as used for other gatherings. Clark stated that the committee needs approval for any physical changes made to any structures or space in the church and stated that Mike Harder is the approval authority for any requests. Pastor Becky stated a name is needed for this new program at St. John’s. She has suggested “Manna House” as a name but is open to any other names and suggests asking the congregation for suggestions. She would like our name to be something different from the ‘Art’s Garage’ so that we maintain our own identity from the Art’s Garage in Port Clinton. There are still some insurance coverage issues to

be clarified and Clark will check into the status of this.

**COMMITTEE & OTHER REPORTS:** The reports were reviewed by the council and required no further action as a result of council discussions except as recorded in these minutes and are hereby made part of the minutes as copies in the record.

Finance & Stewardship: Chelle Blausey presented the report. The committee is still searching for a charity for the loose plate offering for November when we will recognize Men's Health Month. It has also been suggested that with our loose plate offerings, someone from the church could hand-deliver the donation. Cindy Kline offered to deliver the donation we have for Riverview Industries.

Chelle stated that we have \$32,100 in the roof account and another \$3,820 in pledges to be collected between now and August 2026. That brings the total to \$35,920. She also stated that at the end of August, the Capital Improvement Fund balance was \$75,645.85.

Chelle also shared with the council the new envelopes for 2024. They include an envelope for Mission and Ministry. Amanda Moore shared with the council that Mission and Ministry would like to have a loose plate offering for hungry senior citizens.

Clark presented some graphs showing Weekend In-Church Worship Attendance Year to Date (YTD) for 2023 as compared to 2022. We are seeing a negative trend in attendance. He also presented the Weekly General Fund Giving for 2023, YTD as compared to 2022. This year we have an average weekly giving of \$5,808 as compared to what is needed for the budget, which is \$6,795. In 2022, our average weekly giving for the first 38 weeks of the year was \$6,073. This is another negative trend we are seeing.

Property & Maintenance: Mike Harder presented the report. C.L. Deemer Roofing will be replacing the Bell Tower Roof and we are on the schedule but do not have an exact date for replacement. New State Roofing is planning replacement of the Educational Building roof sometime in October 2023. The issue with the circulation pump not circulating hot water was a timer issue and has been resolved. Mike is submitting some Endowment Trust Fund Grants, Inc. for other projects needed in the church.

Worship: Traci Riechman presented the report. On October 1, 2023, we will move from FaceBook live for broadcasting our services to our YouTube live streaming channel. You can find the link on our Facebook page. The council discussed services for Sunday, December 24, 2023. It was decided that it would be best to have a 9:30 am Sunday morning worship service, a 5:00 P.M. service and a 10:00 P.M. service. Traci will have an outline of Christmas services for the next council meeting.

Christian Education: Cindy Kline presented the report. She reported that last Sunday there were 12 students in Sunday School and on September 17th, there were 9.

Clark brought council's attention to the committee notes that stated that the decision was made by the Worship committee to dissolve the American Heritage Girls (AHG) organization. At the present time, AHG has over \$9,000 in a church account at St. John's. Clark stated that it was communicated at the time when the AHG Funds were put under a church account that, if the organization ever disbanded, the money in the account would become the church's funds. Shawna Shadoan will be asked to make sure all outstanding bills are paid. At the next council meeting, the council will decide into which account the money will be placed. The Christian Education Committee can make a recommendation as to where the money will go.

Mission & Ministry: No report was available but the August report was updated and presented by Amanda Moore. The committee contributed as a sponsor to the Car Show in Dylan Everett's memory.

They also contributed \$175 for the Oak Harbor Athletic Boosters for an ad in the Football Program for this season. They donated \$400 to Grand Love for school lunches and haircuts for their students. They helped two families with emergency assistance. They ordered 300 church directories from Priesman Printery. The committee decided they will not be taking any additional motorized equipment for the Durable Medical Equipment closet because they are too hard to sanitize after they've been used. They committee will-also be putting a new Mission & Ministry Fund fundraiser in the Narthex of the church for the 154th anniversary of the church.

They also talked about a plan to help our senior citizens with needed supplies such as grocery delivery. They have talked with GrandLove for ideas on helping seniors. They are planning a family outing to a Walleye hockey game. The next meeting will be September 24, 2023.

Strategic Planning: Gail Browning presented the report. There will be a survey starting this Sunday regarding a shelter house being built on our east lot.

The informational meetings with the congregation were held after services to discuss the Ministry Staff Proposal and a letter was sent to the congregation. Clark suggested that the Mutual Ministry committee meet to discuss any known feedback from the congregation pertaining to the proposal. The Mutual Ministry Committee will be meeting on October 10, 2023. Clark asked Gail to bring any feedback to the council in October.

There is a committee being formed to address an outstanding initiative that was developed about three years ago when we had several proposals on maintenance and upgrades to the church organ. Phase 1, "What will music and worship look like in the future? Phase 2 will follow to discuss "How does the Schantz organ fit into Phase 1's vision".

Mutual Ministry: The committee did not meet.

Executive: The committee did not meet.

Endowment Trust Fund, Inc. (ETF): Clark stated the next meeting is on October 18, 2023. Grant requests are due by September 30, 2023.

Clark stated the ETF board has been discussing future giving. It's been at least 5 years since we've had any estate planning gifts left to the ETF. Many years ago our prior visitation pastor, Pastor Powell, was very interested in estate planning for the ETF and was able to talk to many of our parishioners about planned giving to the church. That kind of ministry has not been available at St. John's for many years.

Clark stated that there are other ways to give besides giving upon death. There are a number of tax advantages for making charitable gifts while still living. Pastor Becky stated that she met with Jim Ridener, Aaron Moore, Suzette Croll, Jim Priesman and Tim Konieczny about end of life planning presentations at the church. Pastor Becky will also talk about the spiritual aspects of end of life planning. On December 3, 2023, after the worship service, there will be a one hour presentation with hand-outs regarding planning. After that Sunday, there will be a follow-up meeting planned in the spring of 2024.

Audit: Clark stated that the committee completed the audit of the August records and found all records in good standing.

Call Committee: The call committee is on hold for the present time.

Engagement Director Report: Sarah Hartigan presented her report. She stated she and Pam Vidal will

be revising the website to make it more user friendly. Clark recommended to Sarah that she and Pam read the book, “Boomerang” that is about designing websites. Sarah has also looked at several church websites for ideas.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

### **1. Council Initiatives Updates – Integrated Plan for Church Music Program:**

The council has had an initiative to develop an Integrated Plan for Church Music for three years, but the initiative has not moved forward. The initiative is to develop an integrated long range plan for what our music program will look like in future years and how the organ fits into that future. There are potentially significant and costly repairs and upgrades needed for the organ in the future.

Clark gave a timeline to the council of the assessment of the needed repairs and costs starting in August 2020. Originally the Muller Pipe Organ Company (our current organ service provider) proposed a recommended repair/restoration scope of over \$25,000 and this was approved by the congregation in the November 2020 annual meeting. A second opinion was subsequently requested and received from the Schantz Organ Company (the builder of our organ) and they offered a different perspective and an upgrade of the organ for over \$110,000. In addition, both companies identified the longer-term need for a more major organ refurbishment project. We then engaged an independent expert, a retired music professor from Ohio Wesleyan University, to provide an independent opinion. He complimented the recommendations of the two previous companies but recommended that we perform a long-term assessment of the total music program and how the pipe organ fits into those plans, prior to making any significant expenditure decisions. At that time, the council approved to indefinitely suspend any major work until the assessment was completed and notified the congregation in the Newsletter. Clark also stated there was an Organ Restoration Fund established at that time which has some current funds. Council established an initiative in January 2021 to assess the future of the music program. However, to date there has been no progress on the initiative.

Clark stated that he has asked the Strategic Planning Committee to take the lead on the initiative and the first phase which will be to perform the long-term assessment recommended by the independent expert. Some of the people who have been suggested for the initiative are Sherry Priesman, Sarah Louk, Tracey Nycz, Karen Abbott, Jeremy Patrick and Aubrey Diebert. Clark stated that anyone with an interest may help and that this will probably entail getting the organ companies re-engaged at some point.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

- 1. Proposed Revision to the Compensation for Services Policy:** Clark presented the draft Compensation for Services Policy to the council. It also includes a Compensation for Services form. One new item is compensation for lay ministry to be paid on a per service basis when approved by Pastor Becky. Pastor Becky stated that compensated lay people might be people who have gone to seminary or had other ministry education but are not currently rostered ministers. Chelle Blausey made a motion to approve the revised Compensation for Services policy and Cindy Kline seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- 2. Request for Use of Church Parking Lot:** Clark received a request for possible use of the church parking lot for events sponsored by others and not sponsored by St. John’s. Council discussion included opinions that the Village would have to be consulted on a case by case basis due to the fact that an event would be in a residential area and potentially impact public

street parking. Clark commented that it could not impact our member parking so it could not be used on a Saturday or Sunday. Council decided that it did not want to give generic approval but would consider requests for use on a specific case by case basis.

3. Discussion on Pre-School/Day Care with St. Paul UCC: Pastor Becky had some discussion with a member from St. Paul UCC about Pre-School/Day Care. Clark asked the council how they felt about conversations with St. Paul UCC. The council agreed that this type of service and facility is needed in Oak Harbor and agreed it would be beneficial for discussions to continue.
4. Reminder on preparation of Annual Committee Reports for the November newsletter: Congregational Council Committee Annual Reports are due by October 15, 2023. Clark reminded all committee chairs that annual reports are due by October 15, 2023, in order to be published in the November 2023 Newsletter and be available for the Annual Congregation Meeting on November 19, 2023.
5. First Presentation of the 2024 Annual Budget: Chelle Blausey presented the first draft of the 2024 St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church Annual Budget being proposed by the Finance & Stewardship Committee. The Director of Youth Engagement Salary, for the position that Clark spoke to at the congregation information meetings is included in this budget. The proposed budget supports a 3% increase in salaries. The total proposed General Fund Budget shows a slight decrease to the 2023 budget. The Maintenance Budget is proposed to remain the same for 2024. The committee is proposing a Benevolence Goals decrease of \$1,000.

Clark then provided a financial overview to the council for 2023 in relation to the 2024 Budget. The overview included a review of member giving to the General Fund and how that relates to the proposed 2024 budget. As presented at prior annual meetings, member support of the General Fund was needed to increase to support the previously included associate pastor position. With the Director of Youth Engagement included in the proposed 2024 budget, the same is true.

Clark's and the Finance & Stewardship Committee's conclusion is that there are sufficient funds in the General Fund to carry the additional new expense of the Director of Youth Engagement for a period of three years, allowing the new position the opportunity to generate new revenue through the addition of a new generation of active giving members. Clark stated that this position is an investment in the future of this congregation, and like all investments, it has to be given the opportunity to develop and grow.

The council had considerable discussion and concluded that there were no recommended changes to the proposed budget. The final proposed budget will be presented to council in October for approval to take to the congregation for approval at the annual meeting.

#### **PAROCHIAL REPORT:**

| CHIAL REPORT:                | <u>Since last meeting</u> |     |       |   | <u>Year-to-Date2023</u> |    |       |   |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|-----|-------|---|-------------------------|----|-------|---|
| Baptisms                     | Adult                     | 0   | Child | 0 | Adult                   | 0  | Child | 3 |
| New Members to Congregation  | Adult                     | 0   | Child | 0 | Adult                   | 3  | Child | 3 |
| Members Leaving Congregation | Adult                     | 0   | Child | 0 | Adult                   | 1  | Child | 0 |
| Affirmation of Baptism       |                           | 0   |       |   |                         | 10 |       |   |
| Funerals / Deceased          |                           | 2*# |       |   |                         | 12 |       |   |
| Funerals of non-members      |                           | 0   |       |   |                         | 1  |       |   |
| Marriages                    |                           | 0   |       |   |                         | 0  |       |   |

\* *Cathleen Bodnar funeral service on September 2<sup>nd</sup>*

*# Robert Harder funeral service on September 18<sup>th</sup>*

## **COMMUNICATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE**

Cherry Street Mission sent a request for financial support for Thanksgiving Meal Tickets which was given to the Finance & Stewardship Committee. The Lutheran Diaconal Association sent a request for financial support for LDA Scholarships, which was given to the Finance & Stewardship committee.

Genacross sent a thank you for our donation of \$150.53. The Ottawa County Humane Society sent a thank you for our recent donation.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS SCHEDULE:**

- September 28: Lion's Club Team Feed in Social Room at 5:00
- Sept 30 & Oct 1: Lutheran World Relief weekend
- October 3: GRANDlove program on addiction in Social Room
- October 7 & 8: Worship service "Pink Out" for Women's Health Month
- October 14 & 15: Apple Festival weekend w/ WELCA Rummage Sale
- October 15: Deadline for the November '23 issue of Eagle newsletter
- October 17: 80 & Over Luncheon in Social Room at 12:00
- October 17: Next Council meeting

## **ROUNDTABLE**

**ADJOURN:** Cindy Kline made a motion to adjourn and Mike Harder seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** The council closed the meeting by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Submitted by:  
Karen J. Demangos, Secretary