

**Bethlehem Lutheran Church**  
**Church Council Meeting Minutes**  
**November 12, 2009**

**APPROVED**

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Present: Tim W., Maggie D. Bill N., Jordan S. Jody M., Roger K., Chuck B., Jane H.,  
Pastor Karen, Pastor Rich  
Visitors: Jean G., Rev. Kisten Thompson  
Absent: Val B., Michelle A., Julie G.

Meeting called to order at 7:04 pm by Tim W.

Introductions of all council members were made.

**Guest Speaker:** Kisten Thompson from North Emmanuel Lutheran Church representing the St Paul Synod spoke of Benevolences and Synod news. The council reported what they are 'excited' about here at BLC: Dane's Place, a future monthly community meal, the new job networking group, our relationship with Boy Scouts and the recent placement of the statue in the Village Green and an explanation of last year's Peace Light. (Note: BLC will again host the Peace Light on Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>.)

There was much discussion regarding the summer Assembly vote regarding the ELCA's stand on sexuality. Rev. Thompson explained that only 1% of the churches in the ELCA (100 of 100,00) are thinking or planning on leaving the ELCA because of this vote. She cited St. Luke's and Hosanna Lutheran as two larges churches that have or are continuing to withhold benevolence payments to the ELCA based on this issue. Rev. Thompson also explained that there are tools and resouces for all congregations to use that are in the process of being developed by the Synod. Bishop Rogness or his assistant(s) are available to visit BLC to talk through and help BLC's congregation with this issue.

Rev. Thompson distributed a handout describing the Synod's activities and our pledge and payments to date. (Note: The annual Toolkit for Congregations to be held Feb. 27<sup>th</sup> was recommended for all council members to attend.)

**October Meeting Minutes:** Approved—moved by Bill N. and second by Tim W.

**Communications Coordinator (formerly Ministries Coordinator) Report:** Jean G. described her new position and responsibilities: her main focus will be communications between groups, staff and the community.

A question regarding the posting of Church Council meeting minutes on the BLC website was discussed at length. This was due to a question at E-Comm the previous week whether the existing plan should be continued. Jean explained her research that found only 1 of 16 area churches posts its meeting minutes on its website. Jody M. raised the question whether this is a confidentiality or informational question to be answered. Jean reported that in the years she has worked here, only one member of the congregation has ever asked for the meeting minutes.

**Motion made to have Jean G. post ONLY APPROVED COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES** on BLC's website. Motion made by Roger K., second by Jody M. Motion passed unanimously.

Jean reported that she would like a photo taken of the new council—she will email dates.

Jean reported that BLC has had funding approved to join the Chamber of Commerce. Chuck B., a current member and ambassador, will ask for a reduction in the application fees for BLC. (Currently \$185)

Jean suggests that all council officers have keys to the building and office codes. Jane H. will provide at next meeting.

Jean reported that BLC's old folding chairs are for sale at \$2 each. This fundraiser will buy a new used rack for storing the new chairs BLC recently purchased with memorial money. (See Blair N., custodian, to purchase.

**Associate Pastor's Report**

Pastor Karen highlighted her work with youth in the last month. (See report for more details.)

### **Treasurer's Report**

Chuck B. reported that revenue is down slightly and net income as stated on this month's report should show neutral, not a down arrow. With five Sundays in November, BLC hopes to make up for this month's shortfall. Also, attendance was up in October. Dane's Place information will no longer be shown on BLC's budget.

Chuck will be checking into refinancing BLC mortgages to see if it is feasible to refinance at this time.

Chuck reported that any revenue above BLC's projected budget will be used to pay off debt.

Jane H. reminded council members that BLC has historically run deficit balances until Christmas and Easter when giving and attendance increases dramatically.

### **Senior Pastor's Report**

Pastor Rich explained the process of the ELCA vote on sexuality. He states that he is looking for direction from the council for how pastor(s) should respond to a potential blessing by a gay couple. He cites for reference: 1) As a council, look towards the Bible and what the verses say on same-sex couples, 2) provide an opportunity for the congregation to gather and talk—perhaps at a Sunday Forum 3) use other congregations that have already tackled this issue as a resource 4) face-to-face meetings. Chuck B. suggested an anonymous vote by the congregation in order to get a 'base line' feeling for how the congregation feels about this issue. Discussion to be continued at future meetings.

Community Meal: Pastor Rich has attended another church's community meal and met with the Hunger Network to lay the groundwork for BLC's community meal. He hopes that it could be combined with the second Saturday night service. He plans to engage the congregation by sending a letter and asking individuals to form small Koinonia groups to do the planning and serving. Pastor Rich would like ~4 teams that would attend and draw on the other community meal now in place before BLC would start its own. Jody M. mentioned that her sister in a Hudson congregation already does this in that community and she will ask her for advice on BLC's meal. Pastor Rich will ask Crossing Bridges for a grant to fund a part-time staff position to oversee this new project.

Staffing Task Force: Pastor Rich and Maggie D. explained the background of this group to the council and its new members. With the absence of the committee chairman (Tom H.), Tim W. will contact the remaining members of the task force and ask them if they want to continue. This is to pursue additional staffing scenarios and to establish the time period of the 'interim' staffing changes now in place. Tim W. asked Jane H. to send previous correspondence of the STF to council members.

### **Giving Tree Discussion**

Tim W. presented an idea to make an additional 'giving tree' for our members of the congregation that are in need. He suggested donating gas cards, grocery gift cards, etc. Pastor Rich reported that the new budget includes a Pastor's Fund that can provide emergency cash in addition to a giving tree. Jody M. asked if provisions could be made for the congregation to donate to this fund (Jean G. will update Benevolence Fund giving instruction sheet to include this information.) The council agreed that this would fall under the Stewardship Committee's mission; Pastor Rich will present this idea at its next meeting.

### **Action Teams**

Tim W. asked that the council and especially, the new council members look over the Action Team committees and join those where seats have been vacated. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

### **Next Meeting**

**Christmas Party at Jane Henkel's (1405 Neal Avenue North, Lake Elmo, MN 55042 (651) 436-5022. Potluck begins at 6 pm—please bring a dish or appetizer to share. A shortened meeting will begin at 7 pm.**

Moved to adjourn by Jody M., seconded by Chuck B. at 9:33 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Jane Henkel, Council Secretary