

Zion Lutheran Church, Minot  
Church Council Meeting, January 14th, 2025

- Meeting called to order by President, Rich Jensen, at 6:36pm.
- In attendance at this meeting: Rich Jensen, John Gruenberg, Matt Sundahl, Matt Stephens, Gary Leslie, Sherry Broderick, Pastor Elaine Sveet, Pastor Natasha Kolles, & Melissa Helgeson~via zoom. Joe Stenvold and Amanda Winkels were absent due to illness.
- Check in and devotion: Paster Elaine led us in prayer to start the meeting.
- No guests or introductions needed at this time.
- Agenda: President Jensen shared that he wanted to change the Agenda around a bit. We would briefly visit about Old Business and change around the order of New Business:
- Old Business:
  - A. Reconciled in Christ ~ Council members turned in their Faith Assessment Surveys
  - B. Christian Education ~ Being pushed out until a later date due to a full Agenda
- New Business: the change in order will be ~
  - A. Annual Meeting Planning (Sunday, Feb. 2nd~need to know who will be there, what we need to do, etc.)
  - B. Discussion/Election of New Council Officers
  - C. Accounting Solutions Bill (increasing/contract renewal)
  - D. 2025 Budget
- A motion was made by Matt Stephens to accept the revised Agenda, seconded by Matt Sundahl. Motion passed.
- The Consent Agenda was reviewed, including meeting minutes from December, pastors' reports, youth director reports, staff/committee meeting notes. (Financial reports will be discussed during budget talks.)
  - Pastor Elaine caught a small typo in the December minutes. The second to the last sentence on the first page should read "It was decided that there could be cuts in other areas **and** fund-raising opportunities to potentially make up the difference." (changing 'of' to 'and').
- A motion was made by Matt Sundahl to accept the Consent Agenda. It was seconded by Matt Stephens. Motion passed.
- Moved on to New Business:
  - A. Annual Meeting Planning (Sunday, Feb. 2nd~need to know who will be there, what we need to do, etc.):
    - We need a verified quorum. Rich is asking that council members who can attend, come 10-15 minutes early, before the service, so we can ask people as they are entering if they are a member and if they are staying for the meeting. If so, we need them to sign the list of meeting attendees. Pastor Elaine said that staff will get refreshments (donuts/ coffee) to entice people to stay for the meeting. Chris Torgeson will get the Zoom link ready. If we need paper ballots, we will hand out ballots and pens/pencils. Pastor Elaine shared that staff can prep these. The ushers can also help to make sure people/ members get signed up.
  - B. Discussion/Election of New Council Officers: Rich Jensen, President, and Melissa Helgeson, Vice President, are at the end of their terms and not planning to stay on. Of the council members present, no one was interested in the President or Vice President

positions. Sherry Broderick agreed to stay on as Secretary; John Gruenberg agreed to stay on as Treasurer. Council plans to ask Joe Stenvold if he would be interested in the role of President and Amanda Winkels if she would be interested in Vice President. No action taken at this time.

C. Accounting Solutions Bill (increasing/contract renewal):

- We have been paying \$800/month to Accounting Solutions. The new contract will be \$950/month, which is an extra \$1,800/year.
- The Finance Committee suggested the possibility of training Amanda Babcock with some financial education so that she could possibly take on some of the financial roles, and to also take some time next year to look at other options. We don't have any other options or solutions at this time.
- In reading through the Engagement Letter from Accounting Solutions, Rich Jensen shared that we can conclude or terminate the agreement with written notification at any time.
- The letter lists Amanda Babcock as the signator for the church. She is not able to do this, so this will be changed to the Council President, Vice President, and/or Treasurer.
- Melissa Helgeson made a motion to approve the Engagement Letter from Accounting Solutions for the 2025 year. Motion was seconded by Matt Stephens. Motion passed.

D. 2025 Budget:

- Council reviewed the Financial Report. Currently, the General Fund is running at a \$19,602.17 deficit. Last year at this time, the deficit was \$17,000.
- Our offering did not hit what was budgeted. We know we will continue to have large expenses (other heat pumps, new carpet) not in the budget as well. The good news is that the heat pump we replaced was paid off through fund raising, etc., so we don't have an ongoing loan for that.
- Pastor Elaine shared several income generating suggestions from the Finance Committee including:
  - Increasing the preschool rent from \$3,400/year to \$3,740/year.
  - Work on hosting a convention for Pastors/Christian Educators. They felt this could potentially bring in \$4,000, and could be done this year.
  - Actively promote rental of the building, especially during the summer. They felt we could potentially generate up to \$2,000 through building rental.
  - Consider lowering the Western ND Synod payment amount from \$18,000 to \$10,000.
  - A long term suggestion was to use a portion of Trust money and invite the congregation to invest in this as well, so we could set up a fund to help with increasing costs.
  - Their suggestion was that we present a balanced budget to the congregation, but try to also build in the amount that was a deficit this year.
- It was determined that an Executive Session was necessary. Melissa Helgeson made a motion to go into Executive Session. It was seconded by John Gruenberg and all members were in consensus.
  - Pastor Elaine and Pastor Natasha left the meeting at this time. Luke Schaefer, head of the Personnel Committee, was recognized as a visitor and joined the meeting at this time.
- Executive Session held.
- John Gruenberg made a motion that council come out of Executive Session. It was seconded by Melissa Helgeson. Motion passed.
- Pastor Elaine and Pastor Natasha rejoined the meeting. Luke Schaefer remained at the meeting.
- Continued discussion of the 2025 Budget:

- Rich Jensen shared that our biggest costs are personnel and we have a recommendation from the Personnel Committee.
- Luke Schaefer shared that the recommendation from the Personnel Committee was to vacate our second pastor position. It would take time, the recommendation would be to plan for four months, to get us into April. The other recommendations were to increase the Pulpit Supply to \$2,250, add an extra \$5,000 to the budget for staff salaries after responsibilities are distributed, reduce PT custodian costs from \$6,000 to \$3,000, cut continuing ed in half for both rostered and programmatic staff, and leave other smaller pieces (i.e. cell phone/mileage reimbursement) in place.
- Pastor Natasha said she didn't think we could vacate her call without Synod approval and that she would be calling the Synod office.
- Rich Jensen shared that he will call the Synod office in the morning. He told Pastor Natasha that she was free to call the Synod office, but that he would also be calling in the morning.
- Pastor Natasha asked if she could please be excused as she was obviously upset. She was excused from the meeting.
- Following Pastor Natasha's departure, John Gruenberg expressed that the cost of his ongoing friendship with Pastor Natasha's family wasn't worth him firing her, so he quit. He officially resigned his position as Treasurer as well. John then left the meeting.
- Matt Stephens also said he was done and left the meeting.
- Gary Leslie also left the meeting; his term was up as of tonight.
- Council was left with 4 members at the meeting along with Pastor Elaine, all of whom felt somewhat blindsided by the other 3 members' departures. No action was taken on the Personnel Committee's recommendation at this time.
- Council felt no decisions could be made at this time. Discussion was held on what to do at this time with members resigning from council, the unapproved/draft budget, and the annual meeting coming up.
- Rich Jensen plans to contact the Synod in the morning. The Bishop is on sabbatical at this time, so he will try to speak with Brad Dokken, Associate to the Bishop, or Murray Sagsveen, Synod Attorney. He hopes to get an opinion on what to do going forward.
- Pastor Elaine will field questions from staff in the morning if there are any. She will also prepare the current draft budget since that may need to be presented at the annual meeting on February 2nd, 2025. If the Attorney gives approval, Elaine will prepare a second version of the budget with the eliminated staff position, starting in April. These two draft budgets would then go to the congregation for a vote at the Feb. 2nd meeting, if this is allowed. Rich will keep Council updated on what is legal or acceptable after he visits with the Synod Attorney.
- John Gruenberg will also have to be taken off as a signer for all accounts as he is no longer Treasurer.
- Meeting adjourned by President Jensen @ 9:19pm.
- The next council meeting is scheduled for February 18th, 2025.

Submitted by Sherry Broderick  
Church Council Secretary  
Zion Lutheran Church