

Zion Lutheran Church, Minot
Church Council Meeting, November 19th, 2024 ~ held via Zoom

- Meeting called to order by President, Rich Jensen, at 6:41pm. Meeting was held via zoom due to poor weather/road conditions.
- In attendance at this meeting: Rich Jensen, Matt Sundahl, Amanda Winkels, Joe Stenvold, John Gruenberg, Matt Stephens, Melissa Helgeson, Sherry Broderick, Paster Elaine Sweet, and Pastor Natasha Kolles
- Visitors ~ Council recognized that Luke Schaefer, chair of the Personnel Committee, was in attendance, and Melody Sundbakken will be joining us later in the meeting to share information with council.
- Agenda: Melissa Helgeson made a motion to approve the agenda. Seconded by John Gruenberg. Motion passed.
- The Consent Agenda was reviewed, including meeting minutes from October, pastors' reports, youth director reports, staff/committee meeting notes, and financial reports from October. Matt Sundahl made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda. Amanda Winkels seconded the motion and the motion passed.
- Pastor Natasha gave an update on her daughter Medora's medical situation. She had a medication change, two of her meds did not work well together, and she had several seizures and ER visits resulting in being flown to Gilette's Children's Hospital in St. Paul, MN. She is now home, but still dealing with some issues and figuring out the seizure triggers, etc This has been a very scary and difficult time for the family. Medora will need to go back to St. Paul for follow-up in January of 2025.
- Because Pastor Elaine was taking care of other business and not initially with us and Luke Schaefer, chair of the Personnel Committee, was logged onto the meeting, Luke shared the updates the Personnel Committee has made to the Handbook. Their plan is that as they make updates to parts of the Handbook, they will bring those parts to Council. A brief summary of the changes proposed are:
 - Purpose & Guiding Principals ~ They removed the word 'obviously' from the text. They also did some clean-up in the definition of terms for staff ~ they moved things around a bit and made some structural changes. As changes are made, the revision date will now be printed in the upper right corner which will be helpful, especially as new members come on board to Council and the Personnel Committee.
 - Compensation ~ The housing allowance for the pastors will now be recorded in the minutes in December rather than January. The housing allowance will continue to be designated by the Pastors & recorded by Council in the minutes.
 - Special Trips & Events ~ Changes were made in supervising youth trips. The rate of pay for non-exempt employees will be 1 1/2 times their hourly rate for hours above 40 hours. Responses to youth situations will also be paid at 1 1/2 times. There will be no financial compensation for hours that are uninterrupted. Staff are encouraged to share costs when possible (shared travel costs). No changes were made to reimbursement of expenses.
 - Employee Expectations ~ There were several changes made in this area. There was redundancy in wording that was removed or restated. The word 'loyalty' was changed to 'respect,' and the word 'frustrations' was changed to 'concerns.' The 'working

hours' were changed from 9-4 to 8-4. Overtime by non-exempt staff needs prior approval. Approved overtime will be paid at 1 1/2 times staff hourly rate. A one hour lunch without pay is provided if staff chooses to take it. One 15 minute break every 5 hours and two 15 minute breaks every 8 hours are provided with pay for full time and regular part time employees.

The Personnel Committee recommended that Council approve the changes as they are brought to us. Luke will present any of the changes in the Handbook to staff with Pastor Elaine. A motion to approve the amendments to the Zion Staff Handbook as presented was made by Amanda Winkels, seconded by Matt Sundahl. Motion passed. Luke left the meeting at this time.

- Pastor Elaine joined the meeting and led Council in prayer.
- At this time, discussion was held regarding the Financial Report: The Finance Team has started to create a budget for Council to look at. Other committees have given their budgets to the Finance Team. Pastor Elaine shared that most of the increase in expenses falls under Building & Grounds oversight, and much of that will be absorbed by transfers from the Building fund and doesn't impact the General fund, but shows our reliance on the Edward Jones Building fund transfers.
 - Last year (2024) our Edward Jones Building fund transfers were \$52,600. The suggestion is that next year (2025), the increase will be \$60,800. Much of this is due to increasing insurance rates. Our actual insurance bill was \$13,100 while we had only budgeted \$9,500. There are also some increases in our utilities.
 - We have 10 new pledgers, about \$24,000 in additional pledging so far this year.
 - Church School Music ~ trying to build up the budget so there's more musician support during church school, so Chris has time to do other things such as talking to parents, rather than leading music ~ that would go up to \$2,250.
 - Children's Ministry ~ building back some things that were used up due to not having a budget last year (education materials, supplies, fellowship activities, communion instruction, confirmation). Trust will pay for bibles again as well as mission pledges for LCM and Metigoshe Ministries.
 - Confirmation retreats funding will go down and Special Events funding will go up (Confirmation Sunday).
 - Congregational Ministry ~ Chris suggested an increase to Leadership resources (books for staff for enrichment and preparation) and Adult Faith Formation (resources for members with lack of funds).
 - Special Events ~ Pastor Natasha requested an increase in funds for a family block party later this year.
 - There will be a slight increase in Family Ministries as well.
 - A total increase of \$1,650 is suggested for Faith Formation areas.
 - Changes to Building & Grounds ~ insurance is a big part of the cost increases (\$9,500 to \$14,000).
 - Line 703 ~ telephone, cell phone, & internet ~ will actually go down ~ was mistakenly included in two places in the budget last year, so that will be updated.
- Pastor Elaine brought two recommendations from the Finance Team:
 1. Changes in the music budget: Currently line #513 'piano and organ tuning' which totals \$350 of the music enhancement transfer. It is suggested that we no longer include this in the Edward Jones Building fund transfer.
 2. Continuing Education for Pastors: Line #807 ~ was \$3,000 and the recommendation is to increase it by \$1,000 (\$500 for each pastor) for a Total of \$4,000.
- Pastor Elaine shared that we continue to struggle with Accounting Solutions and the confusing presentation of the budget/general fund. She shared that they feel we are

\$5,758.40 in the black, but money is coming and going from this account. The financial report was accepted.

○ New Business

- A. Consent to participate in XTO drilling: Pastor Elaine shared this information with Council. Council is being asked if we want to pay a small fee (our percentage of ownership in a proposed well) as Zion was gifted part interest in a proposed oil well. This could amount to some additional income for the church. Melissa Helgeson made a motion to approve spending the \$38.96 to elect to participate in the proposed drilling and completion of the well. It was seconded by Matt Sundahl, and the motion passed.
- B. Anniversary Appeal Update: Pastor Elaine shared that we received over \$10,000 in our Anniversary Appeal. Some of that money, about 3/4's, will go to the heating and air repayment and some will be saved for the new carpet we will be needing in the future.
- C. Building and Music Transfers beginning in 2025: There was a recommendation made by the Finance Team to make one large transfer at the beginning of the year for the funds needed and then reconcile the spending at the end of the year, rather than making smaller transfers continuously throughout the year. It was agreed that this would be carried forward to the next meeting, when we do the budget in December.
- D. Personnel Committee Recommended Staff Budget: This item was saved till the end of the meeting. Luke Schaefer logged back into the meeting for this discussion and Council went into Executive Session, by full consensus, at 8:36pm. In consideration of the Synod and COLA recommendations, the Personnel Committee shared their recommended payroll adjustments of 3% increases for staff, except for Pastor Natasha. Pastor Natasha will not receive any increase up front, but if improvement is seen and maintained by July, a 1.5% increase will be applied at that time. Council will be working on the budget in December. At that time, if things look good, Council can take this recommendation; if not, Council may need to look at lowering the increases. The Personnel Committee had recommended last year that the raise only be applied to the Pastors' salary, not the housing allowance. The Pastors will need to declare how they want to split their salary and housing, but the raise will only be applied to the salary, not including the housing allowance. This will have to be declared and recorded in the December meeting minutes.
- E. Melody Sundbakken ~ Building an Inclusive Church update: Melody Sundbakken joined the meeting to present some information to Council regarding Zion becoming a Reconciled in Christ Congregation. This would involve Zion becoming a welcoming and safe space and open to anyone from the LGBTQ+ community. It is a long process (2-5 years, depending on congregation's feelings). There is currently a Leadership Team in place, and they want to get the process started and need council support. The first thing will be for Council to let the congregation know that a Leadership Team has been formed to gather information and see how the congregation feels about this process. The Leadership Team will need Council to help create a statement to put out in newsletters/bulletins and maybe look at the creation of a bulletin board for posting and sharing information for a period of time prior to one on one conversations starting with congregation members. Hoping these one-on-one conversations can start in February or March. After the one-on-one conversations, we would announce to the congregation that we are going to continue on this journey (if the congregation feels they are ready). Then we would map out the journey ~ there are a lot of steps. Step 6 is education (meetings, opportunities for questions, etc.). Step 9 would be a congregational vote. The last step would be to write what our welcome statement is for being a Reconciled in Christ Congregation. At this time, there are no other RIC churches in Minot. There is

one RIC church in each of these cities: Fargo, Mandan, and Grand Forks (with ties to UND). Council will have more discussion and do a survey at the next meeting (December). We will then give Melody our recommendation regarding going forward with this process. After this discussion, Melody left the meeting.

F. Christian Education information: Tabled until a future meeting.

○ Old Business:

A. Continuing Education Travel for staff: The Trust Committee denied the request for funding for staff to attend training. Trust shared that they did not want to fund these types of requests. After discussion (and much previous discussion), Joe Stenvold made a motion to approve the funding to send both Chris and Kortni to the requested training in Louisville, KY, in January, 2025. Matt Sundahl seconded the motion. Motion passed. Council would like them to share/present what they learned with Council when they return.

○ Sherry Broderick made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by John Gruenberg. Meeting adjourned @ 8:52pm. .

○ The next council meeting is scheduled for December 17th, 2024.

Submitted by Sherry Broderick
Church Council Secretary
Zion Lutheran Church