

\*\*\* DRAFT \*\*\*

St. John Lutheran Church  
Congregation Meeting Minutes

August 23, 2020

1. Council President Ken Nerhood opened the zoom virtual meeting in prayer at 4:03pm.
2. Kandice Dickover provided zoom logistics information.
3. **Council President Update:** Ken noted the minutes from the 2019 meeting were approved during our February meeting. He also noted there have been many changes as well as challenges in the past year, however several things remain consistent such as our focus on prayer in order to hear what God is calling us to do.
4. **Pastor Vision & Planning Update:** Dan reflected on the nine months that he's been our lead pastor. The succession planning which began prior to Dan's arrival will likely continue for quite some time. Dan invited all Facebook users to friend him so that relationships can continue to develop. Dan and Karen discussed how the transition has been a very natural process, and that it's been a joy to work together. Karen discussed the challenges associated with staff reductions which were necessary in light of the financials, and how she appreciates the way all staff members responded. New members of the weekly staff meetings include Fern Nerhood who leads Family Faith Formation, Wendy Woods representing the prayer ministry, and Dave Henn who has been serving in a leadership role for virtual worship.

Dan expressed his thanks to everyone who has been engaged in supporting virtual worship services including Dave Henn, Paul Buker, the band, and Ray who has been leading the audio visual logistics during each service. Dan shared that during the last three Sunday virtual services there has been a total of 58, 58 and 55 accounts respectively joining live, some of which are multiple people per account. There have also been several hundred views of each of these same three services. 40 people have watched the most recent Faith Formations video, and 343 people have watched the band's music video. Lastly, Dan noted that Prayer4All each Wednesday evening has been averaging 12 people, and an average of 35 people have been regularly participating in monthly Discipleship4All activities.

5. **Re-opening Planning Task Force Update:** Karen shared that the process of re-opening is much more complicated than originally thought. Fortunately, we are blessed that our virtual church experience has been going so well. Mark Zahner who is leading the re-opening task force shared highlights of the process. Mark stated that a very diverse group of congregation members was formed to address the various aspects associated with re-opening, and how to do so in a safe and secure manner that addresses the needs of all

members of the congregation. The task force members include Dan Hetherington, Karen Heist, Craig Dickover, Darlene Marden, Jay James, LaDonna Cunningham, Wendy Woods, Julie Wright, Lori Franko, and Thomas and Liz Viets. The task force members look forward to seeing everyone's faces again. Craig Dickover mentioned the task force is considering guidance from multiple sources including the CDC, Governor Hogan, the Delaware Maryland Synod through Jay James, and various other sources through Dan. The number one priority is safety, as well as following the guidance provided by the state. Jay James shared that Bishop Gohl continues to show support and concern for our congregation and has included Jay in a president's group to discuss how to provide the best Godly experience possible given safety requirements. Jay shared that only 45% of the synod is meeting in person, and most of that is outdoors. Many other churches have not been able to replicate the virtual experience being provided at St. John, which is a testament to the efforts of everyone supporting our virtual worship services. Karen shared that our goal for re-opening timeline has been pushing out and the current guideline would be a possible opening in late October, not before Reformation Sunday. This will continue to be re-evaluated as official guidance changes. A Friday evening prayer service is being considered by the task force, which may start in late September, for a very small number of people via online reservations. This would be for those inclined to come out earlier than others, and more details are coming soon.

6. **Highlights for the coming year:** Dan stressed we must ask the right questions in order to move forward according to God's plan. Rather than growing the size of the St. John congregation, God is telling us it's about the Kingdom and introducing more people to Jesus. God is calling us to act differently than the ways things have been done in the past. Dan recommended a book by Dave Ferguson called HERO MAKER which focuses on multiplying leaders and God's Kingdom. God is calling us to invest in his Kingdom, helping ministries replicate and grow, and to invest in leadership across the larger, worldwide Kingdom. This is much larger than focusing just on St. John. Dan emphasized we are being led to join in this larger calling, with "Up, In and Out" expressed in everything we do.
7. **Financial Update:** Jay James referenced the assumptions sent to the congregation with the budget packet. The FY21 proposed budget reinforces St. John's role of being a multiplier for God's Kingdom. Jay noted that forecasted income has been lowered to be in line with current giving trends, and that the recent staff reductions were also a reflection of lower giving levels, which began even before the COVID-19 pandemic. There has been a tremendous amount of prayerful consideration and discernment that has gone into the budgeting process, and Jay thanked Lisa Taylor and the many others who have reviewed the numbers and discerned what God is calling us to do.

Lisa shared that as of the end of July, giving was 20% lower than the budget (forecast). As of the first 11 months of FY20, there is a net operating loss of \$25,030 and a net loss of \$17,280. This was contrasted with April of 2020, where the net loss was \$73,000. As a result of staff restructuring and lower operating expenses such as utilities, the net loss has been trimmed from \$73,000 to roughly \$17,000, which is remarkable. Lisa noted that

investment income is not included in the budget since it can't be forecasted, however it does help offset the loss. Lisa reviewed the balance sheet, providing details on the assets and liabilities as of 7/31/2020.

8. **Review of Operating and Capital budget proposal:** Lisa showed the FY21 proposed budget and began by stating that budget follows vision, which comes from the Holy Spirit. The budget was prepared with careful consideration and discernment as to what God is calling us to do. Lisa stated the FY21 Income projection of \$400,000 was generated by using the most recent giving trend of March through May and extrapolating over the year. Compensation and benefits for our new lead pastor reflect the agreement made at the beginning of his service. There are no staff salary increases, and the staff reductions in terms of positions, salaries, benefits and hours, will carry into FY21. Lisa noted it's difficult to forecast certain expenses, especially in light of COVID-19 impacts. She then provided an overview of each section of the FY21 proposed budget. The Operating Budget is a projection of our income and expenses. The Capital Budget is for building improvements and equipment and cannot be re-directed to cover Operating expenses. FY21 runs from September 2020 through August 2021. There have been no changes to Benevolence. The significant drop in the Staffing expense was noted. Worship expenses for FY21 are forecasted as slightly lower than FY20. Discipleship, fellowship & mission expenses went up a bit, reflecting our "Up, In and Out" calling. In contrast to FY20's Operating Budget (forecast) of -\$27,038, the FY21 Operating Budget (forecast) is projected to be positive at approximately \$3,000.

Ken provided a review of the FY21 proposed Capital budget. He noted that during 2020 we completed the restroom renovations, installed new windows in many areas, and addressed other critical facility issues. Looking forward to FY21, the sanctuary broadcast system is an important expenditure to ensure we can continue providing a high quality virtual worship experience, from the church sanctuary. Sanctuary seating and flooring is another important proposed expenditure, to ensure we can provide a safe and healthy environment for worship. Ken stressed that all options for seating and flooring are being considered at this time, and no decisions have been made. The proposed expenditure in the FY21 budget is simply a placeholder to ensure we can provide a safe worship environment.

#### **Q&A with Jay and Ken:**

Q: What is the timeframe for the sanctuary seating and flooring to be addressed?

A: Ken stated there is no specific timeframe, and that the process will begin soon for evaluating options. Jay mentioned there are church restoration firms locally that may be engaged to assess options. Having cushions and flooring that can be cleaned thoroughly is an important consideration.

Q: Will the pews be replaced with chairs?

A: Ken stated that is just one of the options being considered, and the decision will involve the congregation as a whole.

Q: Are ADA guidelines and accessibility in the sanctuary being considered?

A: Jay stated this is a big concern of his, and any upgrades will have ADA guidelines in mind to make access easier.

Ann Eustis made a motion to approve the budget as presented. Mickey Kibler and Craig Woods seconded the motion. The motion to approve the FY21 budget as presented was approved by unanimous voice vote at 5:18pm.

Ken thanked everyone for participating and wished Jay a somewhat less exciting FY21 as Council President.

Jay closed the meeting in prayer at 5:20pm.