

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH of STILLWATER, MINNESOTA
Congregational Council Meeting Minutes
Held April 17, 2023

Voting Council members present: Lead Pastor Chris Bellefeuille, Bill Bjorum, Krista Gossai, Thomas Haugrud, John Hodler, Jill Longnecker, and Andrew Thelander.

Non-voting Council members present: Parish Administrator Robert Eiselt and Pastor of Lifelong Faith Formation Peter Weston Miller.

Guests: None

Location: Room 108B, Trinity Lutheran Church, Stillwater, MN

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 PM by President Andrew Thelander.

II. Christ Care Prayers

III. Devotions

Pastor Chris led a study of John 20:19-31 seeking answers to “What do I notice?” and “What do I wonder?” Each council member will have the opportunity to lead Devotions throughout the coming year.

IV. Council Learning & Growth

Council members discussed Chapters 5 and 6 of *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders Are Formed in the 2nd Crucible of Change* by Tod Bolsinger. During the May meeting, council members will discuss chapter 7.

V. Approval of Agendas

a. A draft of the March 20, 2023, council meeting minutes was distributed electronically to the council for review.

M/S/P to accept and approve the Minutes from the March 20, 2023, meeting as submitted.

b. Tom moved to amend the pre-printed agenda to add ‘Quiet Title’ and Pastor Chris requested that the ‘Croix Center opportunity’ be added to the agenda.

M/S/P to approve the agenda for the meeting as amended.

VI. Pastor Report

Pastor Chris’ report was distributed electronically to the council for review. Pastor Chris reminded the Council that Pastor Peter will be on Sabbatical May 28 through August 5, 2023.

VII. Administrator Reports

a. The Administrator’s Report and March 2023 financials were distributed electronically to the Council for review.

i. Operating revenue is down 3.3% March YTD 2023 vs. March YTD 2022 while the operating expenses are up 4.4% March YTD 2023 vs. March YTD 2022.

- ii. Bob is documenting the Administrator's responsibilities: project recaps; supplier and consultant contact information; a calendar projecting due dates for internal/external reporting and church events; and miscellaneous information in preparation for his retirement and handoff of duties to the new Administrator.
 - iii. Bob advised that Trinity's accounting firm will review regulations to determine if Trinity is eligible for the Employee Retention Credit (ERC). The application deadline for the 2020 eligible quarters is April 15, 2024.
- b. Stewardship update: Pastor Chris reported that the number of members making financial pledges to fund the Church's operating expenses was down. Most of these members intend to donate but will not pledge. Possible reasons include the uncertain general economic outlook. Steve Olson will provide guidance regarding how to improve results for the next stewardship drive.
- c. Quiet Title: Trinity was contacted by the attorney for the developer of the property at 3rd Street and Myrtle, advising that the developer was starting a "quiet title" lawsuit to resolve a title issue with the property. Trinity will be named a necessary party to the quiet title lawsuit, but no claim is being made against Trinity. The summons and complaint have not yet been served.

VIII. Comprehensive Campaign Update

- a. Bob emailed Campaign financial results as of April 12, 2023, to the Council.
 - i. Pledges received to date: 163; total \$1,821,810.
 - ii. Campaign cash received as of April 12th, \$515,812.
 - iii. \$335,000 paid against the mortgage principal on April 13, 2023.
- b. All campaign funds are allocated based on the campaign's usage formula: 70% for mortgage principal payments, 20% for deferred maintenance, and 10% missions.
- c. Pre-payments on the mortgage principal may be made at any time. The mortgage can only be re-amortized once every 12 months. It is anticipated the next re-amortization will occur in May 2024 while the current interest rate will be adjusted.
- d. Trinity will celebrate the campaign's success and officially dedicate all the campaign's gifts and pledges on Sunday, Sunday April 23.

IX. Croix Center Opportunity

- a. Bob reported that the City has assessed a much higher value for the Croix Center property that will result in a higher property tax bill. The City's valuation is based on comps for property that have a better revenue stream than the Croix Center due to the U.S. Post Office lease that limits lease increases. Bob is working with Eric Olson and Commercial property broker Brian Zeller to seek an abatement based on the reduced income this property receives versus the income realized by the properties used for comps.
- b. Pastor Chris suggested that the council consider designating a task force to investigate what the Croix Center property (excluding the parking lot) could be sold for now vs. in 2031 when the last lease extension for the U.S. Post Office concludes.

X. Trinity Green Space

The Council discussed the need to create a long-range plan for the utilization of the 'Green Space.' This is an important project that must be carefully and thoughtfully completed. It was determined that a team would be assembled to undertake this project.

XI. Shout Outs, Gratitude moments

- a. Robert Eiselt was thanked for his many years of excellent service. The congregation will recognize and thank Bob for his service on Sunday, May 14, 2023, as he moves into retirement.
- b. Jerry Nelson was recognized for his diligent work organizing the Good Friday breakfast.
- c. Rich Larson was recognized for the message he presented for the Good Friday breakfast attendees. Pastor Chris recognized Rich for the good work he is doing as Visitation Pastor.
- d. Pastors Chris and Peter were thanked for the meaningful services conducted during Lent and Easter.

XII. Closed Executive Session

A confidential closed executive session was held with all voting council members plus Pastor Peter Miller.

XIII. Closing Prayer

XIV. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:40 PM.

May 2023 Council meetings schedule

Council Meeting: 6:30 PM, Monday, May 15, in person (Room 108b – Trinity)

Council connections-huddle meeting, if needed: 5:30 PM, Wednesday, May 3 (remotely via Teams).

Andrew will notify the council members closer to May 3rd if this connections-huddle meeting is needed.

Respectfully Submitted,

s/John W Hodler

John W. Hodler

Congregational Council Secretary

Electronically signed