**Advent Lutheran Church – Church Council Meeting – May 17, 2023 Minutes**

**Present – Voting (n=10)**: Dorothy Clementson, Pastor Danielle Miller, Laura O’Keefe, Kathleen Matson, Hans Kriefall, Mary Jordan Samuel, Dorothy Trigg, Damaris Maclean, Carolyn Riehl, Bree Vandenberg

**Present – Not Voting** **(n=1):** Hayley Moe, Linda Kelly

**Not Present – Excused** **(n=1):** Amanda Garcia-Harris

**Opening Reflection & Prayer**

Dorothy C opened us in prayer.

1. **Consent Agenda: Pastor’s Report**

Community Lunch met yesterday and what they need for sustainability including structurally, the participation of Advent members, and the future of the Go Fund Me project. Pastor Danielle is going to send the Council a follow-up note with further details, as it didn’t get added into the Pastor’s Report before the Council meeting.

Part of what was discussed in that meeting was that the Go Fund Me aimed to raise money for projects that were needs & priorities at the time and still are. They are feeling a bit lost in terms of what Council will approve to move forward and are looking for Council to give further direction. We think they need to come to a Council meeting and share what they need and what projects are top priority for them. There feels like there hasn’t been enough communication and transparency between the Community Lunch leadership and the Council. The executive committee met last week and decided that the priority of the June meeting would be the hunger program so that we can help have these conversations. We will focus on Community Lunch in June, and have a discussion with the Food Pantry team at a future meeting.

Pastor Danielle confirmed that Tina has completed all of the necessary new employee paperwork. She’s already started working and fixed some gutter and other minor issues around the building! We’re very grateful to have her onboard!

It was asked if we are counting people and where that data was being recorded. We are counting people on Sundays, and the data is being recorded in the calendar, and it will be included in the Pastor’s Report moving forward. Prior to Covid there was an Excel sheet that was regularly updated. We agreed that would be helpful bring back and see regularly in the future. It could help us determine if there’s a time to discuss returning to two services, and to also inform the hybrid ministry conversation.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Council voted to approve the Pastor’s Report.

**1b. Consent Agenda: April Minutes**

There was one clarification about the Mission Fund, which will be amended.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Council voted to approve the April minutes, with the amendment about the Mission Fund.

**1c. Consent Agenda: Financial Reports**

Pastor Danielle shared that the microphones have been purchased!

It was noted that two music lines are going over budget, should we be concerned? No, because the largest supplemental musician payment is around Good Friday. For instrument maintenance we should keep an eye on it because there was an extra call, but it isn’t concerning at this point.

It was noted that the weekly envelopes line is currently ahead of budget, but that we thought we were behind previously. It was confirmed that we’ve always been ahead this calendar year because someone paid their full pledge at the beginning of the year. Weekly envelopes can be traced to a person and plate offerings are given anonymously in the plate on Sunday.

Attendance has been up weekly, in the 90s the past few weeks. We think the low plate offerings is more about people not having cash on hand, or that people who give larger cash in the plate and write their name on envelopes get added to the system and counted as weekly envelopes.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Council voted to approve the April financial reports.

1. **Basement Committee Report**

Linda Kelly shared a recommendation from the basement renovation team. She shared that we do have a place of assembly permit, dated 8/16/2005 with an expiration date of 6/30/2006. This was issued after the basement was renovated from the BUCC renovation. During that renovation, we don’t believe they filed the plans for that renovation with the city of New York so that permit was issued and approved based on the old plans. Our understanding is that the permit is renewed by the fire department coming in and doing an inspection to ensure we have fire extinguishers, etc to have a safe building and that a direct comparison of the space to the plans on file doesn’t typically happen. We don’t know if they’ve done a previous inspection and we don’t have the paper or if we haven’t been inspected since 2005.

The committee’s first recommendation is to work to find out if our permit has been renewed, and if not to schedule an inspection to get it up to date. Once the inspection happens, the city will tell us if there’s anything we need to address maintenance-wise in order to complete the permitting process. Mary Jordan has been working on finding out about the permit, and has left multiple messages to try to get this scheduled or find out if we have a permit and hasn’t been getting any response so far. Pastor Danielle also found a mayor’s office for churches/religious organizations who could help direct us, or talk to a friend who works in the FDNY and could help direct us. This step is in progress, but is slow moving due to government bureaucracy.

The team’s second recommendation is to connect with the synod to confirm the remainder of the grants. It was noted that we received confirmation after paying for the elevator that the remainder of the money is set aside and ready for us.

The team’s third recommendation is about how to use the remainder of two pots of money set aside for major building work – the synod grant with our matching funds (about $220k), and the deferred building maintenance fund established after a congregational vote a few years ago (about $80k). We should first complete the inspection process and use a portion of that money to fix anything that comes out of the inspection, which we don’t anticipate to be astronomical. The remainder of the money is recommended to be used to address air conditioning, an expense that will be significant but could be covered by this sum of money.

Linda Kelly has done some preliminary thinking on the air conditioning repair. Gem Air (our current AC company) recommended potentially putting the condensers in the window well on 93rd St, but there are concerns about noise, visual, and if the city will even allow it. The consensus is to keep them on the roof, which would mean we need to remove the old units using a crane, repair the roof where they’re sitting, and put new units up there with a crane. 2 of the 3 air conditioners are currently out of service, the only one currently functioning services the offices that are mostly being used as storage right now. The first step would be to hire an engineer to look at the system design and make sure that we’re designed in the right way. Linda has a friend who’s an HVAC engineer who she might call for free advice.

If there is leftover money after the inspection & air conditioning, we can do some other smaller basement updates (flooring, etc).

What would the timeline be most likely? If we decide to move forward now, we’d likely have air conditioning by next summer. The outlay of money would likely start pretty quickly to pay for all of the necessary steps of the process.

We would suggest pursuing both the permit and the air conditioning simultaneously, which has a bit of risk but our assumption is that we would have funds to cover everything. We do think we need to keep consistently submitting expenses to the synod to maintain the grant – we can submit things like the masonry wall repair, permit updates, etc so we keep drawing on that money. There’s enough money to handle everything, but we want to use the synod pot first as much as possible.

There was further discussion about the synod grant and potential worry about the access of the funds since we are straying away a bit from the original grant proposal so we do want to discuss this further with the synod. Linda will ask Madelyn Soussoudis to make this phone call.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Council voted to move forward with renewing the assembly permit and move forward with replacing the air conditioners on the roof, with the use of synod funds for these projects.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Council voted to confirm the air conditioning plans with the synod before moving forward with large spending on this project.

Thank you to Linda and the basement renovation team for your work here!

1. **Finance Strategic Planning Team**

We need 3 Council members to form a financial strategy team to work with Jim Kelly to create a plan to wean Advent off of drawing from our Mission Fund & endowments. This plan would feed into the budget plan in the Fall. Jim would be part of this team because he’s part of the investment committee and lead the strategic team prior to Covid.

Damaris, Hans, and Pastor Danielle volunteered to join this team to work with Jim Kelly. Hans will set up a meeting for the team. Thank you all for your willingness to serve!

1. **“Notes from the Council”**

We discussed in last month’s meeting the goal of communicating more regularly with the congregation in various ways, including having a “Notes from the Council” section of the e-newsletter about once a month. For the first installment, we think it’s important that the congregation understand what to do if they have a topic that needs to be brought to the Council in a meeting. Dorothy T shared a rough draft of the process to share in our first “Notes from the Council” e-letter inclusion:

The Council meets on the third Wednesday of each month, and the executive committee meets the Tuesday prior (approximately) to discuss any pertinent matters and to put together the agenda for the meeting. Whenever possible, it is best to email Dorothy Trigg, council secretary, ahead of the Tuesday meeting with your request to be part of the Council meeting agenda. In that request, please include the topic of conversation and a 1-3 sentence summary of what needs to be discussed and/or decided. Executive Committee will review your request and respond with any questions along with a confirmation of the meeting agenda item. If something timely comes up between the Executive Committee meeting and the Council meeting, still email Dorothy and she will address your request.

There was a suggestion to cut the last sentence, and to add some clarification around the possibility/likelihood that as part of their request we will likely invite them to attend the meeting and present their issue/information. It was also noted that all Council meetings are open to observation for anyone who would like to attend if interested, and it could be beneficial to include this reminder here.

Dorothy T will revise this draft based on the feedback provided and send to Pastor Danielle for inclusion in the newsletter.

1. **Upcoming Meetings**

June 21 at 7pm – this will also be a hybrid meeting

* 1. Food Ministry – this will instead focus specifically on Community Lunch & Go Fund Me, with a Food Pantry discussion in the future.
  2. Music Mondays – we should have their proposal for the Executive Committee meeting, Exec can draft their response and share both with the Council well in advance of the June meeting for consideration. If this can’t be ready on this timeline, we can push this conversation to July. This initial conversation has been started via email but we think a larger conversation is needed. Hans will reach out to Norma & Aaron to make this request.  
       
     We’ve been treating Music Mondays and Community Lunch differently as two major, long-standing ministries of the congregation. Is there a world they should spin off and be their own organization, particularly Music Monday? There are pros and cons to this. We as church leadership haven’t necessarily done a good job communicating what they need to report into us and are more integrated into the Council body. These aren’t new conversations with Music Mondays about how this fits in with ministry, what the partnership looks like, should it be a 501c3, etc.

Food program in 2018 distributed 25k meals, in 2019 was 40k, in 2020 and 2021 exponentially more. There’s been a lot of running to meet needs for food ministries, and now we can pause and plan and walk together to figure out how to sustainably grow and move forward.

In-person Council Retreat – September

* 1. Please bring your calendar so we can discuss dates!  
     We will have a retreat on either the 16th or the 23rd, Dorothy T will send a follow-up for a vote and we’ll move forward with whatever date can have the most number of people in attendance.

**Adjournment — Closing Prayer**

Pastor Danielle closed the meeting in prayer.

*Respectfully submitted by Dorothy Trigg 5/17/23*