**Advent Lutheran Church – Church Council Meeting – April 10, 2019 Minutes**

**Present – Voting (n=10)**: Pastor Danielle Miller, Pastor Gary Mills, David Richards, Michael Hammett, Miriam Sitz Grebey, Deanne Walters, Jon Dohlin, Norma Martin, Juan Minier, Bree Vandenburg

**Present – Not Voting** **(n=2):** Kevin Bowen, Abby Efassonfrenk Ferjak

**Not Present – Excused** **(n=2)**: Blessing Tawengwa, Bayardo Peralta

1. **Call to Order**

Deanne Walters opened the meeting reading a homily on Lent. David Richards read the Council Covenant. The Council members paired up to pray for each other.

1. **Consent Agenda**

The Church Council accepted the consent agenda consisting of meeting minutes, staff reports, and financial statements.

* **Meeting Minutes** — Notes from the March Council meetings.
* **Latino Ministry Report** – Provides updates about the Latino ministry.
* **Communications and Youth Ministry Report** – Provides updates about communications and outreach efforts and youth activities.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Church Council voted to accept all items of the consent agenda as indicated above.

1. **Strategic Discussions: Presentations, Feedback, and Actions**

**Pastor’s Report.**

One point of the Pastor’s Report relates to how Koinonia is closed this summer and the annual summer retreat cannot be held there. Pastor Danielle Miller explained the numerous property and organizational issues (construction after a fire, mold, leadership stepping down, incorporation problems) at the facility, which have caused it to close down. Pastor Danielle said she and Tanya Kent are discussing alternatives. Breann Vandenberg proposed the idea of holding a one-day summer retreat (like a picnic day) accessible by car or transit. Jon Dohlin suggested the Aquarium or Frost Valley Camp.

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

**Financial Reports.**

Deanne Walters led a discussion of first quarter financial reports.

* **Statement of Financial Activities**: We have reconciled up to March in bank statements. The one line that will be redistributed is Property Benefits (Portico benefits) currently split between other lines. Nothing major to report. We are down in income from last year.
* **Statement of Financial Position**: The Morgan Stanley accounts have recovered from the nosedive they took in December due to market forces.
* **Dedicated Accounts**: The Dedicated Accounts report is a work in progress, partly due to year-end/year-beginning transactions, including: El Salvador ($10k that went out last year, then $10k came in this year); Music Mondays; and other things that were previously included in dedicated accounts and now in SOFA, so just reconciling those accounts. Deanne is working with Carla Soraide and Linda Kelly on transitions and getting new processes in place as reporting system has changed and we are now including more information in SOFA.

Norma Martin noted inconsistencies due to the transition in accounting in Music Mondays; she will email notes to Carla and Deanne.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Church Council voted to accept the Financial Reports, subject to audit.

**Mission Grant Request.**

Norma Martin explained a request from Kelly Kandler on behalf of Casa Esperanza (Hope House), an outreach mission under the Lutheran Church in El Salvador that offers food, bathing and laundry facilities, and medical attention to the homeless population in the (very poor) neighborhood around the corner from the Lutheran Cathedral in central San Salvador. The request also asks that Advent sponsor the application under our 501(c)3. This is not an unprecedented ask—Advent has made grants in this situation in the past.

The Council had a discussion, thinking more broadly about this topic and not specifically this request, about whether we are comfortable using our 501(c)3 to sponsor grants now and then, when we typically stipulate that grants must go to organizations with their own 501(c)3. The Council also discussed whether we should more closely vet organizations that we decide to sponsor and allow to use our 501(c)3. Should the Council receive documentation (budget, financial reports, etc.) prior to forwarding a request to the Mission Fund Committee? The group tabled the discussion and will ask for input from the Mission Fund Committee.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Church Council voted to be the sponsoring 501(c)3 for the grant request, as outlined by Kelly Kandler.

**Investment Committee Recommendation.**

Deanne Walters reported to the Council that the Investment Committee discussed the investment

strategies for the various funds that the congregation holds, and seeks the advice of the council on two aspects of those strategies.

1. Should the Tiffany Windows fund (currently approximately $70,000 invested in a conservative vehicle) be left as-is, be moved into a vehicle with a 3-year investment horizon, or be moved into a vehicle appropriate for a 5-year investment? The Council agreed on a 3-year investment horizon.
2. Same question for Mission Fund: 3-, 5-, or 10-year horizon? The Council agreed on a 5-year investment horizon.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Church Council voted to advise the Investment Committee to rebalance the funds with a 3-year investment horizon for the Tiffany Windows fund and a 5-year investment horizon for the Mission Fund.

**Organ Work.**

Pastor Gary Mills explained the work that is required for the organ pipes. The wood pipes (which represent about half of the pipes used in worship) need repair and the metal ranks need to be adjusted and repaired. The work that needs to be done would last some 25 years. The Council budgeted $14,000 for capital needs in 2019; the organ work required will cost $4720 and $17,857, exhausting this budget line. The repairs estimated to cost $4720 could be done first; those that are estimated to cost $17,857 could wait for one year.

The Council agreed to fund the repair and recondition of pipes for $4,720 and defer the other repairs until 2020.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Church Council voted to fund the repair and recondition of pipes for $4720 and defer the other repairs until 2020.

**Scouting.**

A Scouting troop has approached Advent about partnering. Pastors Gary Mills and Danielle Miller spoke to the many advantages of scouting—greater community involvement, volunteering, introducing young families to the church, evangelism—etc. The Council also discussed how the politics and policies of Scouting have changed for the better in recent years. There is no financial obligation from Advent. There would be a community liaison appointed from the Congregation. The partnership would be for one a year period. The Scouts would meet once a week, Sunday evenings, during a time when we do not typically have other space sharers.

The Council enthusiastically agreed to welcome a partnership with the Scouts.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Church Council voted to partner with the Scouts for a one-year term as outlined in the agreement form.

**Diversity Policy.**

Pastor Danielle Miller opened for discussion the conversation, which was tabled last week, about Advent’s diversity policy, and specifically, Advent’s policy to not hire undocumented employees. The Synod is neutral on the topic, though through the Bishops’ offices they have discouraged hiring of undocumented individuals because of potential ramifications for congregations’ 501(c)3 status and tax-exempt status. Some churches that do choose to hire undocumented employees pay undocumented employees informally. The issue feels, to the pastors, like a social justice issue and one that does engage with issues presented in the gospel.

Pastor Gary Mills explained how this could be a dual project with Advent becoming a sanctuary congregation. He explained that a Sanctuary Congregation means undocumented people can come here and know that no one may enter the church to remove someone without the church’s permission, and that the church will not give permission. What it has generally meant in New York is housing people permanently until they are able to leave. The church becomes a place of asylum. This conversation about sanctuary congregation will be tabled for further discussion later, and will ultimately be a congregational decision.

The Council agreed to further explore creating a Diversity Policy that is as inclusive of immigration status as the Congregation, pursuing the Gospel message, aspires to be. Pastor Danielle will take this Council’s direction to the Personnel Committee to wrestle with the implications for hiring and personnel policies.

**Metro New York Synod Grant.**

The Synod approved a $200,000 grant to Advent (for necessary work to bring the basement up to code; work which would also require an additional $300,000 from Advent) that the Advent, in turn, must approve before it is officially granted to us. The Congregation must vote on approving the grant by January 2020.

**Vision Implementation.**

Tabled for further discussion next month.

1. **Next Meeting**

The next Council meeting will take place on **Wednesday, May 15, 2019 at 7 p.m.** Miriam Sitz Grebey will lead the devotional.

* **Adjournment — Closing Prayer.**

David Richards closed the meeting in prayer.

***Respectfully submitted by M. Sitz Grebey, 5/14/19***