

## **Faith Lutheran Church Congregation Meeting Minutes**

January 24, 2021

**(Meeting held via Zoom video/audio and dial-in calls)**

**Voting Members Present: 128**

### **Council Members Present**

President Beth Sekera, Treasurer Jim Hall, Secretary Chris Bettin, Sandy Becker, Tammy Daugherty, Phil Hartweg, Mark Pedersen, Debbie Rohla, Chris Sorce, Rachel Sorce, Deb Twaddle, Pr. Shelly Satran, Pr. Joe Yucha

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by President Beth Sekera at 12:05 p.m.

### **Opening Prayer**

Pastor Joe Yucha

### **Welcome**

President Sekera thanked everyone for attending “our first and hopefully only all virtual January Annual Congregation Meeting.” She provided instructions to participants on how to ask questions or make comments and how to vote by Zoom or telephone.

### **Approval of Minutes**

**MOTION** (Tammy Daugherty/Debbie Rohla): To approve the minutes of the January 26, 2020, Annual Congregation Meeting; the minutes of the January 26, 2020, Special Call Meeting; and the June 27, 2020, Building Safety Congregation Meeting. (Carried)

### **Approval of Agenda**

**MOTION** (Deb Twaddle/Jim Hall): To adopt the agenda as presented. (Carried)

### **President’s Reflections and Report**

President Sekera remarked that 2020 will be remembered for how the pandemic “changed our lives or, at a minimum, put them on hold,” and then added, “But the story is different for Faith.” She went on to outline the many activities that took place, projects that were completed, and goals that were accomplished despite the challenges.

The year began with two significant January events: the largest Women of Faith gathering in Faith’s history held at Eaglewood Resort & Spa in Itasca, and the enthusiastic Annual Congregation Meeting during which Faith extended a call to Associate Pastor Joe Yucha, who accepted the call.

As the COVID-19 pandemic ramped up at the end of winter/early spring, Faith adapted to online worship thanks to the creativity, energy, and enthusiasm of the pastors, staff, and volunteers from

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the congregation. Faith's first-ever virtual Congregation Meeting was held in June to consider and approve needed building renovations and safety upgrades. Since the church building could not be fully utilized due to the pandemic, the timing was right for undertaking these projects. President Sekera thanked Council members Mark Pedersen (Property) and Phil Hartweg (At-Large Safety) for "skillfully guiding this effort," and the many Faith members who lent their time and effort, adding that "I'm excited to inform you that the work is nearing completion."

President Sekera said that even before virtual church services became a necessity, thanks to the foresight of members Denise Cmiel and Tom Pfaff "we were pretty much ready to go when online worship became our primary option." She also thanked Tammy and Rich Daugherty who recorded and edited the virtual services for timely posting on the Faith website.

One benefit of going virtual, according to President Sekera, was that "we quickly learned that we needed to upgrade our sound system and streaming capabilities to enhance our online worship experience." She gave thanks to "our generous donors who have made possible a new system for video streaming sermons and special services that will be installed in the coming month (February)."

President Sekera also mentioned the joy of worshipping outdoors during summer and fall 2020, and then again on Christmas Eve. "Despite the cold," she said, "more than 230 members attended services that night to celebrate the birth of our Savior." She reassured everyone participating on the Zoom meeting that "as soon as the weather warms up and we are able to gather again on the front lawn, we will do so until it is safe to once again worship in our beautiful, renovated church building!"

In closing, President Sekera said, "We did not and will not let the COVID restrictions derail us. With God's help and guidance, we will continue to figure out how to safely worship, volunteer and stay connected. I have always felt proud to be a part of this community, but 2020 showed me that *Faith does move mountains.*"

### **Report of the Senior Pastor**

Pastor Shelly Satran thanked President Sekera for providing "a great summary of the state of the congregation," adding, "What a year! As Pastor Joe has said, 'unprecedented' took on 'unprecedented' in 2020."

Pastor Shelly spoke about COVID, and how many among the congregation have had it in ranging degrees of severity, all of them wrapped in concern and care. "Many among us have had loved ones with it and worried and prayed for and with them," she said. "We have mourned loved ones and some near and dear in our congregation who died with COVID as a cause."

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She noted that no one has been immune to the strain of the pandemic—whether health, economic, emotional, relational, or all of these. COVID-19 has stretched and strained everyone in different ways.

“Additionally, in our country a veil was pulled back this summer—a veil that further uncovered racial inequality and systems that perpetuate injustice,” Pastor Shelly said. “We looked deep to examine our own roles and complicity, which is no small work and deserves sustained attention but hasn’t been able to receive it for all else that has happened.” She added that “I haven’t even mentioned politics yet. In the year of a presidential election, politics always dominate headlines and our attention. This year’s election became an endurance run that hit bottom with the events of January 6.”

Pastor Shelly commented that the community of Faith has weathered all of these challenges, but “without the usual strengthening that God gives us through each other’s presence; without being able to find some peace sitting in the holy space of our sanctuary together; without the smiles, hugs, checking in on each other, and meeting new people that happens over coffee; and without being able to serve others by working shoulder to shoulder in the same room. All of these things have been limited, and yet my friends, here we are with one another on communication devices still standing as a people and still strong as a community! We had a budget forum last Sunday with 50 participants and all of the questions asked were about how we can be more generous as a congregation and keep our eyes focused on serving our community. All of this is a testimony to who we are. But bigger than that, it is testimony that our story here isn’t our story, it is God’s story.”

She thanked the Faith staff for “going the extra mile and then another” this year to problem-solve, troubleshoot, and find new ways of “carrying out our ministry and seeking to face the problems of our world with courage and faith. By the grace of God we will continue to do the same in the coming year. I am reminded of the words that are spoken so often in worship whenever we are commissioning a person or a group to ministry—words that ring louder to me than ever this year: ‘I will and ask God to help me.’ I know we will and I know without a doubt God will help and guide us on our way in living out mission and ministry in the coming year.”

#### **Finance Report (2020) and Proposed Budget (2021)**

Treasurer Jim Hall presented the 2020 year-end financials and the proposed 2021 budget. (Detailed information can be found in the Faith Church 2020 Annual Report.)

Jim started by “closing the book on 2020,” a year that was fraught with challenges but, for a host of reasons, wound up with Faith Church in a remarkably positive financial position. Jim cited four major reasons for this: 1) Faith obtained a Paycheck Protection Program loan for \$73,376 in April that was subsequently forgiven in November; 2) expenses were well under budget due to less

activity in the building after March; 3) regular envelope giving, mostly received via direct mail, was close to

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budget; and 4) Christmas special envelope giving was exceptional. The result was an unprecedented surplus of \$131,605 for the year.

Bob Sitze raised a question concerning loan forgiveness dates, and Jim explained that the bank sent notice of forgiveness of the loan in October but the official notification letter from the Small Business Administration was received by Faith in November.

Jim reported that the Congregation Council voted to recommend to the membership for approval the following use of the 2020 surplus:

- Leave “cushion” to cover a budgeted 2021 deficit -- \$7,500
- Transfer to a dedicated account for Faith’s estimated unfunded share of building renovation/life safety costs -- \$36,105
- Increase Capital Maintenance Fund -- \$64,000
- Benevolence:
  - Rebuild Seminarian Support Fund -- \$4,000
  - Increase Glen Ellyn Food Pantry donation (due to COVID need) -- \$15,000
  - Increase Mission Trip Scholarship Fund -- \$5,000

In 2020, Faith benevolence included donations in the following amounts to these organizations:

- ESSE -- \$4,000
- Glen Ellyn Food Pantry (Capital Campaign) -- \$2,500
- People’s Resource -- \$1,000
- NAMI DuPage -- \$1,000
- Walk-In Ministry -- \$1,000
- PADS (April – emergency hotel funds) -- \$1,000
- St. Andrew’s Church & Campus Ministry -- \$500
- Concordia Place -- \$500
- Lutheran Disaster Response -- \$500

In addition, Faith distributed \$11,586 in COVID assistance to individuals and families in need during the pandemic.

Jim then presented an overview of the proposed 2021 budget, including the following highlights: 1) A small deficit is anticipated that will be covered by the 2020 surplus; 2) a mid-year return to normal (from COVID) is assumed; 3) regular envelope revenue will be 1 percent lower than the 2020 budget; 4) special envelope giving will increase by 18 percent based on the 2020 actual; 5) plate offerings and user donations will decrease by 50 percent; and 6) expense changes taken into

consideration include new technology expense items (\$5,000), local benevolence (increased from \$12,000 to \$15,000), and salary and benefits (increased per ELCA guidelines).

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Total budgeted expenses for 2021 are \$827,569 (up from 2020 budgeted expenses of \$825,691) and total budgeted revenue for 2021 is \$820,000 (down from 2020 budgeted income of \$826,400), for a deficit of \$7,569 (which, as noted, will be covered by the 2020 surplus).

**MOTION** (Mark Pedersen/Phil Hartweg): To approve the 2021 budget as presented. (Voting to take place via electronic and paper ballot following the meeting.)

#### **Building Renovations and Life Safety Update**

President Sekera thanked Phil Hartweg, Mark Pedersen, Gregg Bresnahan, and Ron Guastaferrri for their outstanding work on the building renovation and life safety projects, then turned the floor over to Mark for a progress report.

Mark began by thanking the congregation for approving the funding for the renovations and life safety projects at the Congregation Meeting last June, noting that “it really shows how committed everyone is to the long-term future of Faith and the ministries we support.”

Mark reported that all of the work is “nearly complete and looks great,” comments that were supported by a slide show depicting the work progress. Twenty-four prefinished doors have been seamlessly added to the building for fire safety reasons, as mandated by the Village of Glen Ellyn and state of Illinois, bringing the church building up to code. Mark noted that the doors everyone seemed most concerned about are located outside the sanctuary, but “they look like they have always been there” and do not make the entranceway seem narrow.

He gave a “shout out” to the church members who helped with painting, saying “Faith is blessed to have so many dedicated volunteers who will step up when needed. I am grateful for all the work they have done!” The painting took the better part of three weeks, he added.

With regard to the ESSE restrooms and the lower-level restrooms, the work was extensive but if there was ever a time to undertake updates to these facilities, this was it (due to the building being largely unused during the pandemic).

In terms of the budget, Mark said “we were able to keep some costs down by doing the work ourselves,” but the overall cost of the project will still be approximately 10 percent higher than the original estimate. Most of the added costs are the result of additional work required by the village during the permit process (adding five additional doors, A/V alarm devices and emergency lighting in both restrooms). However, since the costs are being shared by Faith, Rainbow Place, and ESSE, Faith’s total cost will still be below the \$100,000 amount that was approved by the congregation.

Mark also thanked Phil, Gregg and Ron, noting that work on these important projects (research, tours, inspections, meetings, etc.) has been under way since Faith was first made aware of

potential fire code issues in 2015. It has been a long, time-consuming project. Mark then opened the floor to questions.

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Arlene Bettin asked whether there are plans to replace the carpeting throughout the church. Phil replied that the carpet on the lower level at the bottom of the stairs has been replaced by non-skid tiles, but there is no timetable for replacing carpet throughout the rest of the building. Carpet cleaning is scheduled for after the construction is completed and will “reveal if there are more urgent needs,” he said. He also mentioned the amount of plumbing that was replaced by Mike Rahm during the renovation project, eliminating concerns about that aspect of the building, and noted that the next big renovation project will most likely be the roof.

### **Faith Constitution Updates**

Jane Stroh reported on recent updates to the Faith Constitution. She thanked Pastor Shelly for being asked to oversee the update with the support of committee members Deb Hornell and Bob Sitze. She also recognized Walter Becky and Teri Pehta for their help with the 2017 revision that was adopted in 2018, and thanked Walter for his input concerning revisions to the endowment language this time around. She also thanked the Congregation Council for its input on the final document.

Jane referred members to the proposed changes that were posted on the Faith website in early January. The changes mostly consist of grammar corrections and language clarifications. The committee’s first goal was to make sure that having electronic meetings was expressly provided for by adding section C10.08 and removing language that requires written ballots. She noted that these changes do not mean written ballots cannot be used, but if circumstances arise where it is impossible to use written ballots for a given meeting, then the church won’t be in violation of its constitution.

The committee’s second goal was to update and clarify the language in the continuing resolution pertaining to the Endowment Fund. The language that was revised was written in 2000, so it needed clarification and updating. The changes appear in number 1 of C5.05.05.A00, which align the Faith Constitution with ELCA requirements, and number 4 of C5.05.06A00, which relate to the upcoming 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Faith Church.

The committee’s third goal was to keep the constitution updated with the latest changes from the ELCA national body that were adopted at its last Triennial Convention.

Pastor Joe asked a question about clarification to the wording of line one in C8.02.e, and Jane replied that the committee will investigate.

**MOTION** (Tom Pfaff/Deb Hornell): To approve the revisions to the Faith Lutheran Church Constitution as recommended by the Constitution Committee and the Congregation Council. (Voting to take place via electronic and paper ballot following the meeting.)

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### **Elections**

President Sekera and Pastor Shelly instructed the meeting attendees on the procedures for casting their ballots online or by driving by the church to vote using a paper ballot. Voting would remain open online and via the drive-by option until 3:30 p.m. following the Congregation Meeting. For online voting, in order for a ballot to count, only one voting member per ballot was allowed and the person voting needed to include his or her name on the ballot for verification purposes. Individual voters at the church would be recorded in a ledger.

Arlene Bettin asked how the results would be shared, and Pastor Shelly responded that the membership would know the results of the voting on candidates, adoption of the 2021 budget, and adoption of the revised constitution by later “this afternoon” or the next morning (Monday).

Voting results are included at the end of these minutes.

### **Recognition of Retiring Council Members**

President Sekera thanked Chris and Rachel Sorce (Faith Formation) for their important work in helping to shape this new ministry along with Kayla Feil, Director of Children, Youth & Family Ministry.

She then thanked Treasurer Jim Hall for his tireless work and leadership on Council over the last four years. “Jim’s institutional knowledge of the church and his willingness to share it has been so helpful in guiding the Council,” she said. “There have been numerous changes at the church during Jim’s tenure, and through all the conversations his humor and calm voice on both the Exec Council and Congregation Council have been immensely appreciated. The next treasurer has big shoes to fill!”

Pastor Shelly then thanked President Sekera for her thoughtful leadership, hard work, and ever-presence during her three years on Council and especially her final year as president facing down the many challenges presented by the pandemic.

### **Closing Prayer**

Pastor Shelly

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by President Sekera at 1:14 p.m.

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### **Voting Results**

The voting results concerning the election of Council members, adoption of the 2021 budget, and adoption of the revised constitution are as follows:

Meeting attendance:

- Online (devices): 108
- Phone: 2

Total ballots cast: 128

- Online ballots: 126
- Drive-by paper ballots: 2

Results:

- Adoption of 2021 Budget: 126 yes, 0 no, 2 abstain
- Adoption of Revised Constitution: 126 yes, 0 no, 2 abstain
- Bill Alrich, Congregation Council President (first term): 127 votes
- Tim Hohulin, Congregation Council Treasurer (first term): 128 votes
- Joe and Kelly Parratore, Congregation Council Faith Formation (first term): 128 votes
- Tammy Daugherty, Congregation Council Communications (second term): 128 votes
- Deb Twaddle, Congregation Council Worship (second term): 128 votes
- Pr. Don M. Hallberg, Endowment Committee (first term): 128 votes

**Respectfully submitted by:**

Chris Bettin, Secretary