

Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, December 8th, 2025 / 6:00 pm / Broadway Garden Estates Community Room

Present-Bruce Belseth, Pastor Megan Preston, Greg Tvrdik, Michelle Flaten, Gene Hartwig, Scott McDonald, Stephanie Heseltine, Cody Hammer, Pastor Karen Young Trenne, Jed Burkey and Pastor Julé Ballinger.

Opening Devotions / Prayer- Jed

Reports

Secretary's Report from November Meeting

- **Motion to approve the November Secretary's report - Stephanie (M); Gene (2nd); motion carried**

Treasurer's Report / Attendance Numbers

- **Motion to approve the November financial report - Scott (M); Michelle (2nd); motion carried**

November 2025

YTD Income \$1,348,253

YTD Expense \$1,569,784

YTD Net Income (-\$221,530)

YTD Budgeted Expenses \$1,625,777

YTD Actual Expenses \$1,569,784

Expenses Under Budget \$55,993

Other Financial Updates

First Lutheran has received \$23,000 in gifts from the congregation since the special appeal letter was sent out in October from the Council. We paid back the \$25,000 line of credit from early November. Then we had to borrow \$35,000 at the end of November to pay bills and make payroll. This was approved by the finance team. We have received \$34,000 for the Capital Campaign.

Attendance Numbers

The 2025 worship attendance numbers are fairly consistent for the past few years. In November the average attendance at worship was 515 for all services.

Board Reports

Serving

No meeting held since the last Council meeting.

Communications

No meeting held since the last Council meeting.

Finance & Facilities

The Finance and Facility Board met on December 3rd, 2025. They shared that the Christmas Appeal Letter was mailed yesterday. Board members discussed the importance of coordinated messaging throughout December. Each worship service will have a different speaker during offering time that will align with the Christmas Letter and the stewardship talk will also occur during offering. There was discussion about doing a noisy offering. More to come on this later. The HR Task Force will meet

with Directors next week for continued review and alignment. The HR Task Force has done an initial review of all job descriptions and now the focus is recommendations that better align staffing with the 2026 budget realities.

The Finance and Facilities Board discussed the current financial challenges First Lutheran faces. Ministry boards remain under budget by \$55,926 but income has not met projections. The year-to-date deficit emphasizes the critical importance of December giving. Last December's income was \$312,379.60.

Net Financial Position

- **Budgeted YTD Loss:** \$(145,404)
- **Actual YTD Loss:** \$(221,498)
- **Behind Budget:** \$(76,094)

The Finance and Facilities board reviewed all 2026 ministry board budgets with the following adjustments and agreements:

- **Pastoral procurement** moved to Miscellaneous Expense under Finance & Facilities.
- **ELCA Support** reviewed for accuracy and alignment. Should it be a % of monthly income?
- **Continuing Education** moved to Personnel Expense.
- **Employee Wellness** moved to Personnel Expense.
- **Repairs & Maintenance** set at **\$50,000** to cover parking lot work, painting, and needed projects.
- Agree to remove personnel costs from board-level percentages, instead categorizing personnel in consolidated lines: **Pastoral, Lay Staff, Preschool. M/S/C**

The Finance and Facilities board discussed an inquiry the church received regarding renting three acres of tillable church land. Key points from this discussion include:

- As a non-profit, a **split-record deed** would be required to receive taxable rental income.
- Estimated taxable income: approx. **\$720 per year**.
- Administrative burden, registration fees, and tax implications outweigh the benefits.
Motion made, seconded, and carried (M/S/C) not to proceed with renting the land or initiating a split-record deed.

The board discussed the best office location for the intern considering workflow needs, reduced interruptions, and the need for the intern to be close to pastors and administrative staff.

- **Motion made, seconded, and carried (M/S/C) to designate Ann's office as the intern office for the next 12 months.**

Their next meetings will be on January 7th, 2026 at 11:30 am and January 14th, 2026 at 11:30 am to focus on the budget and HR.

Worship

The Worship Board met on December 1st, 2025. They discussed preliminary plans for Epiphany. If Epiphany does not fall on a Sunday it is celebrated on the second Sunday after Christmas. It was agreed to celebrate it on the second Sunday after Christmas even though it is also the 11th day of Christmas. Discussions for this year's theme are ongoing. There was preliminary discussion in preparation for Lent regarding the noon, Wednesday and Sunday services. This could be a time to try the newer version of the Lord's Prayer and use of the Nicene Creed.

The board discussed rules for utilizing temple talks. It was determined there are times that items may need to be presented as temple talks. Requests for temple talks will have to be presented to the

Worship Board for permission. Depending on the topic the preferred way to present information would be through congregational forums and newsletters.

The board decided to provide sealed individual servings of gluten free communion bread/wafers for those who request them. The servings are more expensive than the current method but considering the small number of servings the overall cost will be minimal. The health and safety of our congregants is the priority.

They discussed and reviewed compensation for worship support people. The congregation currently compensates the following people that serve in a supply capacity for certain functions:

- Supply Pastors are currently compensated
- Music Director support is currently compensated
- Organist to be compensated if not filled by existing staff
- Guest Directors/Presenters case by case
- Outdoor worship director supply to be added to list

We do not compensate seminary students for participation if they are receiving monetary support from the congregation. They discussed the results of the responsibility assignment work identifying everything that is related to worship is approved by the Worship Board. The information will be included in the updated Worship Board purpose and vision description.

Learning

The Youth Committee met and added Julie McDonald, Carter Rush and Carlee Seircey as members of the committee. Julie McDonald volunteered to be on the Learning Board to fill the open position now that Cody Hammer is the Learning Board chair. The board is working on finding youth mentors. Blaze students are working through small catechism. The Learning Board shared programming number updates with the Council. Currently there are 120 youth in Blaze, 165 youth in Spark and Ignite. The youth are making candles for Advent and edible manger scenes.

Pastors Updates / Reports - Pastor Julé, Pastor Megan and Pastor Karen, Pastor Julé's Report

Pastor Julé led preschool Chapel, taught confirmation twice, led the funeral for Roger Riley and has another funeral this Friday. She is part of the Resilience Group along with Pastor Fleener from Shalom. This group helps the community know what is available when an emergency happens. Pastor Julé led David's Table which is planning a worship service in the new year for the community for those with special needs. She has been working with Molly on the new website to create a space for information about David's Table. She took time off at Thanksgiving and was grateful for Pastor Megan stepping in. She is planning a wedding and will be getting married in December.

Pastor Megan's Report

Pastor Megan officiated two baptisms on the same day and had a wedding this past Friday. She has spent time with Anne Challes regarding transition planning after she retires. Pastor Megan is finding volunteers to fill Anne's role. She expressed gratitude for the retired nurse that is going to take over the Parkinson's support group along with Lisa, a nurse from Vivie.

Pastor Megan participated in the Thanksgiving community service which was well attended. There are around 30 people who attend the Surviving the Holiday's group and she is hoping there could be a committee to take this over. She has been doing a lot of one-on-one meetings for the internship. There are four lay people who have said yes to being on the Internship Committee which is required by seminary. Pastor Megan is still waiting to hear from the Endowment Committee which will meet

later this month regarding financial support for the internship. Jessica Paulson said she would like to do a 12 month full time internship starting February 1st. There may be an opportunity to work with Bethesda church as well because their pastor is on medical leave. Megan will reach out to Pastor Jerry to inquire more about this possibility.

Pastor Karen's Report

Pastor Karen has been here for six months at the end of December. She took six days of vacation in November and was able to visit daughter in New York. She expressed thanks to Pastor Megan for holding down the fort for the Thanksgiving Eve Service. Pastor Karen shared the Transition Task Force will begin gathering the history of the congregation this week. They are asking for people's memories/highlights and tough memories through the first two weekends in January. Then there will be a congregation in Forum January. The HR Task Force is at work and plans to meet with directors Tuesday (or Wednesday in the afternoon if needed due to weather). They will have a recommendation for Council in January. The HR Task Force is meeting with pastors, directors Kim, Molly, Randy and administrators separately.

Church Budget / HR Task Force Update & Discussion

Church Budget

There was discussion about moving personnel out of the budget for each of the boards. Personnel would then have its own line item in the budget. This change happened when the church restructured its boards. The budget will now reflect personnel as a separate line item.

- **Motion to move the personnel costs from the board budgets for pastoral, lay staff and preschool to separate personnel line items in the budget -Stephanie (M); Cody (2nd); motion carries**

Board chairs were given paper copies of their proposed budgets for 2026. Chairs need to take these numbers to board members and give feedback to Greg T by Christmas Eve.

HR Task Force Update & Discussion

See Pastor Karen's Report for update.

Jessica Paulson Update

There was discussion among the council about various fundraiser events and ideas to cover the cost. Please continue to share ideas with Pastor Megan and others.

Nominating Committee Preparation

There was discussion about having staggered change on the Council. This change can be addressed when the constitution is updated. The church needs six Synod assembly delegates. We will also need two representatives from First Lutheran for the Luthercrest annual meeting in October. Scott and Julie McDonald volunteered for this position.

Final "Fuel the Mission" Results

Turkey Bingo went great. We raised \$2,362 plus an additional \$150 in matching funds. Thank you to all who participated in bingo and donated items for the blind auction.

Quick review of the Designated Memorial Gifts Policy

The Chancel Choir has been removed as a line item from the budget and has reopened the Chancel Memorial account.

Council Forum Review

These meetings will happen on the Wednesday and Sunday following the Council meetings. Cody, Gene and Scott will lead the next meetings.

Quarterly Reviews for December Discussion

Pastor Julé is still working on her quarterly reviews. They are about half done due to weather but overall have been going fine. Pastor Megan and Greg T also shared their reviews are going well. Pastor Karen is done with hers. They all shared these meetings are good to rise above the day to day logistics. It is allowing the staff to be heard and share their thoughts/anxiety due to uncertainties.

Annual Report Discussion

Molly should be sending out what she needs from people including a list of what your board has done and a synopsis of our ministry.

Close with the Lord's Prayer

Reminders:

- **Next Executive Meeting - Thursday, January 8th at 10:00 at Travelers Inn.**
- **Next Council Meeting - Monday, January 12th at 6:00 in the Large Conference Room
Opening Faith Story & Prayer - Gene.**
- **Annual Meeting - Sunday, February, 8th at 11:15. (Please set this date and time aside as there will not be a regular monthly meeting.)**
- **Upcoming Forum Leaders: Wednesday, December, 10th and Sunday, December 14th are Scott, Gene, and Cody.**
- **Reports will be sent out to each board needed to be completed for the Annual Report.**

Submitted by:

Michelle Flaten, Secretary