**Advent Lutheran Church – Church Council Meeting – December 14, 2022 Minutes**

**Present – Voting (n=6)**:, Damaris Maclean, Hans Kriefall, Dorothy Trigg, Dorothy Clementson, Amanda Garcia-Harris, Kathy Matson

**Present – Not Voting** **(n=2):** Vicar Sergio Centeno, Vicar Hayley Moe

**Not Present – Excused** **(n=4):** Laura O’Keefe, Pastor Danielle Miller, Michael Hammett, Bree Vandenberg

1. **Opening Reflection & Prayer**

Damaris Maclean opened us in prayer.

1. **Consent Agenda: November Minutes and Pastor’s Report**

We rejoiced in the Baptism we celebrated in November, which was included in the Pastor’s Report. We remembered that there used to be a “shepherd program” for new baptismal families like this one so that they maintain a connection to the church and don’t disappear after the Baptism service. This could be something worth considering as part of the Children, Youth, and Families program development that Vicar Hayley will be working on this year.

Vicar Sergio’s final Sunday is December 25, Christmas Day and his internship officially ends on Dec 31. We will pray him out this Sunday Dec 18 when more folks are likely to be around. Thank you to Vicar Sergio for everything you’ve given to the congregation this year, and we wish you the best of luck in the next steps on your pastoral journey!

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Council voted to approve the consent agenda.

1. **Financial Process Update**

Dorothy Clementson has taken on the role of financial secretary, working with Hans as our Treasurer. Thank you for your contribution!

Dorothy and Hans shared a recommendation to consolidate our giving platform all into Vanco from Tithe.ly. They noted that there are a few different ways that money comes in – Vanco (used by about half of givers), Tithe.ly, Paypal (not really used), Stripe (Music Mondays), and Plate Offerings. All donations are entered into Servant Keeper – which tracks not just who gave & when but also our membership records. There was a question previously about switching to QuickBooks, but neither Vanco or Tithe.ly would interface with Quickbooks. Quickbooks would eventually replace ParishSoft, not Servant Keeper, so that’s not an issue in this consideration.

The reason for this recommendation is that the interface with ServantKeeper is much more direct and has less room for error when using Vanco; Tithe.ly has to be imported in via Excel sheet and can cause significant errors in giving statements. This creates need for manual manipulation if the wrong data is imported or there are any other errors.

What about the cost? This was one of the main reasons for the switch initially, as Tithe.ly was less expensive than Vanco. Vanco has now agreed to match the Tithe.ly pricing even though they used to be more expensive. They also have an ELCA relationship, and are a more established company with more reporting options available.

How difficult (or not) is it to change/update pledge in Vanco vs Tithe.ly for the user? This was another point from the original switch to Tithe.ly was user ease in the interface. Ultimately though Vanco is fairly easy for the user, and we can provide support along with the robust Vanco support.

We currently have just 2 licenses for the Servant Keeper software – one on PD’s computer and one on Amanda’s computer. This is limiting for the financial committee team who wouldn’t be able to work on finances outside of Advent’s building, but after investigation we will be able to move to the cloud based version which gives more flexibility.

We discussed that it is ultimately redundant to have two platforms, so it makes sense to move forward with this recommendation and to determine the next steps for sharing this update with the congregation.

Hans, Dorothy, and Linda will work on the financial side of Servant Keeper. Dorothy will train Amanda on the membership side for keeping address records, etc for mailings. Council is reclaiming ownership of financial management which will help everything be clearer and more in line moving forward.

It was also recommended that we put a hold on moving to a bookkeeper service until the Treasury team has been firmed up and processes are more settled, to confirm that items are continually coded to the correct lines. We’re currently missing some information that a bookkeeper might need. We should return to this recommendation next meeting after a deeper conversation with Pastor Danielle, and will vote again in January to change the recommendation on bookkeeping.

1. **2023 Budget & November Financial Report**

Hans shared a draft budget for 2023. There have been discussions around various assumptions about giving. The biggest concern is congregational giving. In 2022, we budgeted $300k; as of 10/31 we were at $203k and projected to end around $260k. We don’t have to guess though, we will know that number before this comes back to Council in January and to the congregation for a vote.

How much can we really expect to grow the budget? A reach budget is 20% growth from YE estimate, but it feels very optimistic. Hans will revisit this % with the budget committee.

The budget team is waiting on a report from the Food Ministry team on what their estimated income will be for 2023, as they’ve spent through most of the reserves already so we need a better sense of what they’ll bring in to be able to budget expenses accurately.

Is there a GoFundMe update? Damaris met with Food Ministry leaders at the end of November. The concern was that the extent of what they were asking for was essentially a capital campaign that wasn’t approved by Council. Another issue was that the Food Pantry team wasn’t involved and their needs aren’t included. It was noted that the donation asks can’t go to Advent members because the fundraiser wasn’t approved by the Council. No kitchen or other renovations can take place without a formal approval from Council.

One of the community lunch volunteers has some corporate donors who want to give but want to give directly so someone needs to be in touch to help facilitate that.

Ultimately there’s a communication issue between Community Lunch and Food Pantry. We will need to continue to determine priorities in the new year – food ministry, building, etc. Amanda will work with Damaris and Laura O’Keefe to help facilitate further conversations around Food Ministry work.

We discussed Council structure briefly, noting that it would be helpful to do some Council training in the new year, as well as getting more regular reports from standing committees.

Hans shared new information about our gas bill. At some point in 2021 our gas meter stopped recording our gas usage. Our 2022 spending has been only about $400 to date when we budgeted $8000. ConEd doesn’t seem to know this is happening. Do we flag it for them? The risk of flagging is that they ask for back pay in which case we would negotiate it to the best of our ability. We agreed to flag it to ensure we’re on track while it’s less than a $10k issue before it becomes a potential $50k issue in 7 years.

We got a $40k administrative grant from the City tied to the food ministry for “non-food” expenses, and it can go into the general operating fund.

We will run through the Parsonage fund in the next few years. We’ve been supplementing the budget with draws from the Parsonage fund as well as the Mission fund. The fund wasn’t set up for operating expenses, but we’re treating it that way. What have we spent that on this year? Rent & utilities for parsonage apartments. In the past we’d paid for Pastor’s apartment out of operating funds and used just the Parsonage for renovations and other maintenance work. This will be a continued conversation next year to determine future usage and how to move forward once the fund is depleted.

Synod Giving for 2022 has been paid and caught up after earlier giving delays.

Madelyn Soussoudis is looking at disability payments, which are currently much higher than budgeted.

We never hired a handyperson, so we will need to bring personnel back into that conversation next year for conversation between Pastor, Personnel, and Property to determine a plan for moving forward.

Do we need to be a little less optimistic and a little more realistic in the 2023 budget? We are ending this year at a $24k deficit from an optimistic budget, which is really a $50k deficit since we’re already drawing from the Mission Fund as part of the budgeted income. How can we maintain our work for this year, and think about growth later?

1. **Amanda Gray Admin Office Update**

Amanda Gray officially began on Monday November 7 and has been with us Monday - Friday, 10am-3pm. Her onboarding has been slower due to Pastor Danielle’s maternity leave but that will be rectified in January.

She has taken over answering phones, gathering mail, receiving deliveries and answering email correspondence. She has taken over coordinating space sharers, contracts and event coordinators. Amanda is working closely with Dorothy Clementson, Hans Kriefall, and Linda Kelly in learning the new financial processes and her role in their smooth execution. She and Dorothy Clementson are also filing, archiving and re-filing the multitude of papers. In addition, she is managing the overall calendar.

Members of Council who have worked with her so far say she is enthusiastic & hard-working and really wants to be involved in the work. They have all enjoyed working with her. Thank you to the hiring team!

1. **Stewardship Campaign Update**

There is a lot of work left to do in Stewardship. 30 pledges have come in so far, so the team is working on individual follow-ups next to increase this number.

Dorothy C shared historical pledge vs non pledge giving. Pledge amounts have gone down significantly (pledged $400k in 2015 vs $150k in 2022, while total gifts were $400k vs $260k approximated). There were 126 giving units in 2015 vs 27 pledged in 2022. People have gotten out of the habit of pledging, and we’re not emphasizing the difference between *pledging* and *giving*.

There are 12 families who pledged last year but not this year. There are 25 families who gave regularly and/or significantly last year but haven’t pledged last year or this year.

In addition to the planned personal follow-ups, could we also do a dedicated email that includes how much we have pledged and what we still want to get? The team is also going to be pulling reports about closing individual giving gaps for 2022.

It would be helpful if we can say everyone on Council has pledged – if you haven’t please do so this week so we can include it in the letter. The letter can be signed by PD, Council, and Giving team. It would also be helpful to make an announcement during the service on Sunday.

Notes for Next Year: We have had a strong history of stewardship previously, but missed some important points this year. There were 3 weeks of giving talks during the serving that didn’t include a strong mention of pledging & tithing; there was not a moment to bring pledge cards forward publicly; pledge cards available in the back and held up every week. Nothing else should be planned for Stewardship Sunday, it should be a dedicated Sunday.

How many pledges received were online vs paper form? Out of 30 pledges, 13 were online. How many pledges came from people who only worship online? 9-10 are people who almost exclusively worship online but most generally are people who used to worship in person and for various reasons now they do not.

1. **Nominating Committee**

Michael is not able to lead the committee, so Dorothy T will lead this.

Who do we need to add to our team? Who has non-profit experience? Who can contribute to the group? Who is involved in different ministry areas? We as a Council need to start tapping people.

Rich Merghie, Dan Applegate, Carolyn Riehl, Rose T, Fred Grumm

1. **2023 Annual Meeting**
   1. Plan & Congregational notification (by mail, better address keeping?)
      1. Meeting will be January 29 and we do need to send a letter
   2. Report collection
   3. Resolutions or concerns
      1. Budget approval
      2. Council members
      3. Nominating Committee
      4. Reapprove Carlos as synodical deacon
      5. Basement update (without a vote) – know what has already happened, but team would present on where we are and what the next steps are
      6. Other ministry areas to highlight? Hunger ministry; Latino ministry
   4. Council nominations

What kind of fellowship can we have around the annual meeting? Perhaps something like hoagies or another light, catered meal with a (suggested) donation where we can eat briefly and have fellowship, then have the annual meeting. Hayley, Kathy, and Amanda will spearhead this effort.

1. **Sergio & Latino Ministry**

Sergio had a meeting with the Latino Ministry leadership team. Breakfast church didn’t get the traction with Latino community in the neighborhood or with previous Spanish worship attendees, but participants did appreciate the mix of service types for the congregation. The team’s suggestion is to potentially add more multicultural elements into 11am service in regular rotation.

The Latino Ministry Committee includes Carlos Lopez, Juan Minier, Zoe M, Vicar Hayley, and Adam Fairchild.

Thank you to Vicar Sergio for all you’ve contributed to our life at Advent!

1. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be Wednesday January 18 at 7pm on Zoom.

**Adjournment — Closing Prayer**

Vicar Sergio closed the meeting in prayer.

*Respectfully submitted by D.Trigg 12/14/22*