**Advent Lutheran Church – Church Council Meeting – August 16, 2023 Minutes**

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

**Present – Not Voting** **(n=0):**

**Not Present – Excused** **(n=1):**  Damaris Maclean

**Opening Reflection & Prayer**

Dorothy C opened us in prayer.

1. **Consent Agenda**

* Pastor’s Report – there is a lot of great news and work in that letter, thank you Pastor Danielle!
* July Minutes
* July Financial Reports
  + Things like space sharing amounts are typically lower in the Summer, so we anticipate it will pick back up in the fall.
  + The Metzger gift will need to be invested for two years because we will be getting a second installment that puts us over the $25k threshold. Hans recommends putting it in the Mission Fund for this investment rather than a CD because the interest will be stronger.
  + Do we regularly draw from our various funds? We have budgeted a monthly withdrawal from the Mission and Parsonage funds because we are currently working above our income and the congregation agreed to use these draws to cover our operating budget. We are on track this year to draw the exact amounts budgeted for to cover our budget. The draw from the Mission Fund will be $25k, $6600 from the Tiffany Fund to cover insurance, and $24k from the Parsonage Fund. The Food Ministry and Music Mondays funds are a device to show us what those ministries are spending. Both ministries are self-funding, so whatever we spend we draw from their reserve to show that those expenses have been met.
  + Looking at the activities report, it looks like we’re about $34k behind budget for this year, should we be concerned about it at this point? No because we are anticipating a grant in Q4 of this year which should put us
  + Insurance update – we got bad news for insurance costs for next year. Because of the slip and fall lawsuit and our insurance company will be settling that, our insurance premium will be going up by about $18k next year and we will have to budget for that in next year’s budget. This year we budgeted $21k for insurance and next year we’ll have to budget about $38k. Pastor Danielle tried to negotiate this but was unfortunately not successful.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Council voted to approve investing Dorothy Metzger’s bequest in the Mission Fund for two years.

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

1. **Bookkeeper Proposal**

Last year the finance team was exploring engaging a professional bookkeeper, which we decided not to move forward with until we had an internal handle on our finances. Hans has been doing this work as Treasurer for the past few months, but ultimately it is too much work for a volunteer to do, especially one who is not a professional.

Hans continued the exploration work and reached out to a freelance bookkeeper who does a lot of bookkeeping for nonprofits. She charges $650/month which is half of what other agencies we were talking with were doing. This would cover 12 hours a month which we think would be more than sufficient, and if it does go over it would be billed at $50/hour. We spoke with a number of references who spoke very highly of her. She is willing to work within ParishSoft (our current bookkeeping software).

Hans would stay in the Treasurer role, overseeing the finances and ensuring that the invoices are coded to the correct amounts. We would begin this transition in September, with the goal of turning it over fully in October. Any bills that need to be paid manually, Hans would still handle as well as she wouldn’t have authority to print or sign checks. We think it’s still important that an Advent member has visibility on all of our accounting, but they don’t also need to be the one doing the actual bookkeeping entries.

The Council is authorized to enter into additional contracts up to 5% of the annual budget without going back to the congregation for approval, which this falls well under as an $1800 expense for the remainder of the year.

The question was asked, what’s the worst thing that could happen and how would we protect ourselves? The protection would be monitoring the bank account which Hans will still do and can do online. The bookkeeper wouldn’t have authority to pay bills, she would just be empowered to mark bills as paid and handle the accounting and journaling. To catch any potential bookkeeping mistakes, we would review the financial reports and the bank account carefully (especially Hans as the Treasurer) to check for any major issues.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Council voted to approve moving forward with the proposed bookkeeper contract with Intuitive Bookkeeping at $650/month for the balance of the year, with the intent to renew in 2024.

Thank you Hans for your great bookkeeping work to date!

1. **Hybrid Worship Committee Update**

Carolyn Riehl shared an update from the Hybrid Worship Committee who has met twice, including people who typically worship in person and who typically worship online. There was a lot of energy for maintaining our hybrid worship structure, so the question wasn’t about *should* we do it but how could we do it better.

A lot of great ideas were discussed and shared with the Council in a handout from Carolyn. There are 2 categories of ideas – ones that cost money and ones that don’t. There was a lot of energy behind generating the ideas that don’t cost money and jumping in to try them.

The ideas that do cost money are not insubstantial amounts, particularly around the equipment we have and overall setup. Ideas include a better screen in the sanctuary, more microphones and cameras, and fewer cords and cables. We’d have to do the research to get some of these ideas into the budget process in order to implement.

In terms of next steps, the team has shared the ideas with the pastor and with the Council. For the non-monetary ideas we need to just start trying these and the team is tapping the necessary team in order to implement. The team does want to find a way to get more input from other worshippers, bringing in additional perspectives.

Pastor Danielle included a potential wireless projector as part of her Pastor’s Report, which we could do for just under $500. Pastor Danielle is talking to a few members about Thrivent Action grants to help cover this cost. This projector would help reduce the number of wires as well as giving a sharper picture and better daytime projection. It will also allow us to move the “command station” to the organ-side of the church so it isn’t quite as prominent. This had strong support from both the team and the Council.

The team doesn’t necessarily have decision-making authority, they were convened as more of a brain trust. They recommend passing the ideas to the worship leaders (music, pastoral, technical) to create some short- and long-term plans to start implementing these ideas. As a next step, we recommend Pastor Danielle and the staff, with support from Carolyn, help to prioritize the list of ideas to move the list from ideas into action.

An additional idea particularly for the nominating committee is to consider tapping somebody from the online community as a future Council member to increase their representation on the Council team.

Thank you to the whole team for their ideas, and especially to Maya and Dawn for their great work leading the technical side of worship.

1. **Music Mondays Update**

The finance team is going to meet with Aaron & Norma to explain the proposal that some of Music Monday’s income come back to Advent to cover some expenses on their behalf. The team is proposing a $20k annual cost, basing it on the various costs including bookkeeping, administrator time, insurance, electricity, etc, based on an analysis that Linda Kelly did about actual costs but not covering the full cost because they are still a ministry of Advent. This will help support them without needing to become a standalone organization.

The food ministry receives a grant every year from the city to help cover administrative expenses, which comes to Advent and our operating budget, so this would be a parallel structure to help cover some of those administrative costs.

Do they tell donors that they are a ministry of Advent? Not explicitly, and that could be a concern for donors who don’t necessarily want to fund a church. But ultimately it’s covering expenses that are incurred by Music Mondays, not other church ministries. Music Mondays doesn’t have their own bank account, so it’s all Advent money in the end.

This charge would change Music Monday’s budget, but they have a significant surplus so we don’t believe this amount would negatively impact their programming ability. The $20k charge

1. **Council Fellowship Event**

We were discussing a Council retreat in September. However, as the Executive committee continued to discuss what the focus would be, we do not have a full agenda because our recent meetings have been so full and productive. In lieu of a full retreat, we would like to schedule a fellowship lunch event one Fall Sunday after church so that we can gather as a Council in person and enjoy each other’s company. There is a Doodle poll circulating and Dorothy T will find a consensus date and update everyone in the next week.

1. **Associate Pastor Call Update**

At our last meeting we talked about calling Hayley as an associate and various funding options. Pastor Danielle has continued doing funding research. Many people at the Synod office are on vacation currently, including the person she was talking to about funding and our assistant to the bishop who can help guide us through this slightly unusual call process.

Pastor Danielle has submitted a few letters of inquiry for grants for additional funding as well as speaking with other potential funding sources. She has also spoken to a few key members of the 20s/30s group about ways we can potentially use this opportunity as a jumping off point for increasing giving and stewardship in the 20s/30s group. There are a lot of irons in the fire, and we hope to have some more concrete answers in early September.

Because the call process will likely be lengthy, the Executive Committee proposed extending Hayley’s contract through the end of the year so that we don’t lose her work and the momentum for this process in the interim.

How does Hayley feel about all of this uncertainty? It is nerve-wracking, but she feels so strongly about her call at Advent that she is willing to entertain the uncertainty.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Council voted to extend Hayley’s contract through December 31 on the same terms as an interim step as we work through the call process, at a cost to Advent of approximately $8000 which would be drawn from the Mission Fund.

1. **Jeremy Chan Green Card Support**

Jeremy Chan, our director of music, has been discerning this summer about if he wants to return to Australia or stay in the US. He has been in the US for about 12 years and has been submitting for the green card lottery every year and not been successful. He would like to stay in the US and will go through the individual green card process. He has asked Pastor Danielle to write a letter of support to help in that process. This would not be supporting him as an employee, so we don’t have any financial implications, but would want to share our sincere support of Jeremy as an excellent musician and person.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Council voted to submit a letter supporting Jeremy Chan’s green card application.

1. **Upcoming Meetings**

* September 20 at 7pm – hybrid
* October 18 at 7pm – hybrid
* November 15 at 7pm – hybrid
* December 20 at 7pm – hybrid
* Future topics for discussion: Sunday School next steps, Hybrid Worship report, Food Pantry, Hospitality (summer exercise), Parsonage and Condo Management teams

**Adjournment — Closing Prayer**

Pastor Danielle closed the meeting in prayer.

*Respectfully submitted by Dorothy Trigg 8/16/23*