



**Semi-Annual Meeting of the Congregation  
Bethlehem Lutheran Church  
Mankato, Minnesota  
November 19, 2023  
10:50 – 11:20 AM**

**MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE:** 98 (Quorum = 75)

**CALL TO ORDER:** President Jason Bruns

**OPENING PRAYER:** Pastor Jay Dahlvang

**MINUTES:** Action: The minutes of the spring semi-annual meeting held on April 23, 2023, and the minutes of the special meeting held on May 14, 2023 taken by secretary Bob Ihrig were approved on a motion by Maria King and second by Dee Saman with all in favor.

**OLD BUSINESS:** None

**REPORTS:** Available on BLC website for member review.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. 2023-24 Council/Board/Committee Goals**

Secretary Bob Ihrig highlighted the 2023-24 goals established by the Council and BLC boards/committees. These are available on the BLC website for member access.

Members were encouraged to review these goals to understand the planned goals and activities of our various established formal groups. These provide a focus and direction for each group during the year. Written reports outlining the results in accomplishing these goals will be presented at the spring semi-annual meeting.

The Council, boards and committees were thanked for their commitment to implementing one or more of 5 goals and 38 objectives of the 2022-26 BLC Strategic Plan. This commitment and supporting actions will be essential in successfully fulfilling the plan.

**B. Strategic Planning Goals Update**

Pr. Jay provided an update on the 2022-26 strategic goals. The 5 goals identified by the strategic planning task force and approved by the Council and congregation were reviewed. 38 specific objectives or activities have been written to implement the 5 goals. He noted that the Council reviews one of the 5 goals at each monthly meeting to highlight the goals and actions taken thus far. A year-end assessment will be provided at the April 2024 semi-annual meeting. The strategic plan task force will meet again in June to review this

assessment and determine what has been accomplished, what still needs action and determine any needed changes in the plan for 2024-25.

### **C. 2022 BLC Financial Review Report Approval**

The Financial Review Committee and Financial Secretary Elizabeth Ruiz met on February 4 to conduct the official 2022 BLC financial review. The following March 3 report was submitted for approval by the congregation:

“On February 4, Elizabeth Ruiz, Frank Larsen and Kristine Rebelein met to review year-end financial information.

We looked over and reviewed the bank reconciliations. There were no discrepancies and everything reconciled to \$0.

We reviewed a few checks and they tied back to the reconciliations correctly.

We reviewed the estimated budget vs the actual budget numbers. We discussed some larger differences and they all reconciled correctly.

Payroll was reviewed and it checked out correctly.

We reviewed some payable accounts and they all checked out correctly as well.”

**Action:** Motion by Bob Ihrig; Second by Mary Bliesmer to approve the 2022 financial review report. Approved on a unanimous vote.

### **D. 2024 Proposed Budget Approval**

On recommendations by the Budget Committee and the Council, the 2024 BLC proposed budget was presented and discussed. The following major points were highlighted by President Jason Bruns and Financial Secretary Elizabeth Ruiz for income and expenses with a proposed budget of \$853,773. This represents an increase from the 2023 budget of \$829,702 and equals a balanced budget of income and expenses.

- ❖ Lay Staff Salaries: The pay increases recommended by the Personnel Committee reflect the value placed on our staff. They are based on positive performance reviews, inflationary cost of living and the desire to align with national data on comparable position salaries.
- ❖ Monthly Budget Deficits: The September 30 general fund budget reflected a -\$62,000+ deficit. This improved to a deficit of -\$32,000+ at the end of October. This is a reflection of generous giving and fewer expenses. The congregation was thanked for its financial support.
- ❖ Budget Changes: Few major changes are proposed overall in the 2024 budget.
- ❖ Summary & Explanation of Line Items: A written summary and explanation of specific budget line items was reviewed as background for discussion. Minor adjustments were made in different accounts to cover current and projected income & expenses.
- ❖ Mortgage: This is being paid off with monthly payments of \$8,187 and capital campaign pledges that have totaled \$399,683 thus far. The mortgage has been reduced from \$1 million+ to \$632,000+. This is a positive development since it saves on future interest payments. The goal is to pay off this remaining balance during the next 2 years with capital campaign payments.
- ❖ Income: Projected income for 2024 is \$534,100 compared to \$533,150 for 2023. Total projected income is \$817,785. With projected expenses of \$853,773, this would result in a deficit balance of -\$35,988.
- ❖ Estate Gift: BLC will receive a financial gift from an estate. \$35,988 of this gift will be applied as 2024 income to achieve a balanced budget for 2024.
- ❖ Board/Committee Budgets: A few small increases were requested. All budgets were frozen at 2023 levels to minimize church expenses.

- ❖ Other Expenses: Other expenses for Music & Worship, Family Faith Formation, Benevolence and Administration were largely frozen at 2023 levels.
- ❖ Property Expenses: Projected to increase by \$5,250 to reflect needed increases in property insurance, custodial supplies and inspection/service contracts.
- ❖ Utilities: Projected to increase by \$7,000 to total of \$55,050 compared to \$48,050 this year.
- ❖ Staff Compensation: Lines 165-188 detail pastoral and lay staff compensation. Pr. Jacie's compensation is proposed to increase to align with the synod compensation guidelines based upon pastoral experience. In lieu of a salary increase, Pr. Jay recommended and the Council proposed an additional week of vacation for him to total 6 weeks for the year.
- ❖ The lay staff compensation proposal totals an \$8,420 increase from the 2023 budget that reflects wages, FICA/Medicare Taxes, pension plan and health insurance.
- ❖ Total pastoral and lay staff personnel costs increased by \$12,346 over the 2023 budget.

The following questions and information were shared by congregation members and Council members:

- ❖ Narrative Budget: The 2024 narrative budget was highlighted to reflect how BLC priorities are met with projected activities and expenses detailed in the 2024 budget in the document "Why Are The Lights On?"
- ❖ Benevolence: A question was raised about the commitment of BLC to benevolence. It was reported that benevolence totals 18-20% of the overall budget.

**Action:** The proposed 2024 BLC budget as presented with no changes was approved on a motion by Carol Meyers-Dobler and a second by Mary Bliesmer with a unanimous vote.

#### **E. Appointment of Josie Lust to Council**

Josie Lust was approved by the Council at its October meeting to fill the Council member-at-large position created by the resignation of Jessica Auel. Per the BLC constitution, this must be approved by the congregation at the next semi-annual meeting.

**Action:** On a motion by Wendy Keenan and a second by Liz Paul, Josie Lust was approved by the congregation to fill the Council vacancy on a unanimous vote.

#### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Pastor Jacie Richmond led the membership in prayer to close the meeting.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Dee Saman, a second by Maria King and a voice vote at 11:20 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Bob Ihrig*, Congregation Secretary