



**Semi-Annual Meeting of the Congregation
Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Mankato, Minnesota
April 10, 2022
10:50 – 11:41 AM**

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE: 85 (Quorum = 75)

CALL TO ORDER: President James Arentson

The following comments were presented by President Arentson to the congregation:

1. The CDC public health policies pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic were highlighted in guiding Council guidelines for the congregation during the past year. We adapted and adjusted to changing health circumstances and CDC recommendations. The BLC congregation and staff were thanked for helping us to navigate the pandemic during the past year.
2. We are still searching for a BLC member to take on the 3-year responsibilities of Vice-President, President-Elect and President. This position starts June 1.
3. The flag placement issue was reviewed. This involved a diversity of congregational opinions. Our common values provided a foundation for discussion, discernment and decision. The final decision involves placing the American flag and a Diversity flag on either side of the main door to the sanctuary along with written explanations. This represents the inclusive and welcoming congregation that we are.

OPENING PRAYER: Pastor Jay Dahlvang

MINUTES: Action: Minutes of the last semi-annual meeting held on November 14, 2021, taken by secretary Bob Ihrig, were approved on a motion by Bob Ihrig and seconded by Brad Groth with all in favor on a voice vote.

OLD BUSINESS: None

REPORTS: Available on BLC website and in print at this meeting for member review.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Election of 2022-23 BLC Officers, Council and Board/Committee Members

Bob Ihrig, chairperson of the Nominating Committee, acknowledged the outstanding leadership and service of outgoing President James Arentson. His term of office will end on May 31 of this year. Mary Bliesmer will assume presidential leadership on June 1.

Bob presented the ballot of nominees for positions on the Council and boards/committees for 2022-23.

- The ballot represents the names of members who agreed to continue service for additional 3-year terms to expire on May 31, 2022 and new members or members filling open positions on various boards/committees. A total of 92 such leadership positions exist to guide church activities.
- Starting with 27 open positions in February, the Nominating Committee was able to fill 19 of these positions by individuals willing to renew their terms for another 3 years and new members who were contacted or volunteered to serve.
- A total of 8 open positions remained after completion of the nominations process: Vice-President, Facilities (1), Stewardship (1), Finance (1), Nominating Committee (2) and Personnel (1).
- Members were encouraged to volunteer to fill these positions. Marian Mallory volunteered for the Stewardship position. No additional nominations were received. The Nominating Committee will continue to seek out individuals to serve in these positions with approvals to be made by the Council.

Action: On a motion by Bob Ihrig and a second by Chris Paul, the revised ballot was approved by all in attendance on a voice vote.

B. Recognition of Outgoing & New Officers, Council & Board/Committee Members

President Arentson thanked BLC members for their previous service to the congregation and welcomed new members of boards/committees for the next year.

C. BLC Strategic Plan Update

Pr. Jay provided an update on the BLC strategic planning process conducted in December – April. He explained that the process is almost completed. He reviewed the various meetings held by the planning committee. Various congregational events such as small-group listening sessions, sharing in the history of BLC and reviewing our congregational norms provided information to serve as the foundation of future goals. Community leaders were interviewed by the committee. The committee and Council met on April 5 to finalize 5 priorities to pursue. These are being written up along with specific strategic actions for approval by the Council. These will then be shared with the congregation.

D. Call Committee Update

Amy Haigh and Jill Contreas presented an update on the work of the BLC call committee established to call a new associate pastor.

Amy thanked Pr. Kristen Venne (transition pastor) for guiding and facilitating the work of the committee. The strategic planning committee was thanked for providing required background information for the call process. The congregation was thanked for attending meetings held by the call committee and participating in the survey process essential for the Ministry Site Profile.

Jill reported that the site profile is being finalized and will be shared with the congregation at a town hall meeting on Sunday, May 15 at 10:45 am. All members are invited to attend. Pr. Barb Streed of the Southeastern MN synod staff, who has worked with the call committee, will be in attendance to explain how the site profile will be used by the synod to identify potential pastoral candidates. Future interviews with selected candidates will then be held by the call committee.

Call committee members were recognized and thanked for their service to Bethlehem.

E. Approval of Capital Campaign Company Recommendation

President Arentson introduced the issue of approval of the Council recommendation for the 2022 capital campaign company.

Bob Ihrig provided a background on the decisionmaking process associated with this Council recommendation. He referred to the document entitled: 2022 BLC Capital Campaign “Everything You Always Wanted To Know” Essential Questions and Answers to guide members in understanding this issue. This was provided to members at this meeting and is available on the BLC website.

- A. The Council approved proceeding with a new capital campaign to pay off the existing BLC mortgage that totals approximately \$1.1 million.
- B. The Stewardship Board was charged to coordinating the vetting process for professional capital campaign companies. 4 companies were contacted with 3 submitting proposals for consideration. 2 companies – GSB Fundraising and Walsh & Associates – were interviewed with a unanimous recommendation made for GSB. The Council unanimously approved this recommendation at its March meeting.
- C. GSB will charge BLC approximately \$45,500 to lead and coordinate the capital campaign that will also include the 2023 stewardship annual pledge campaign. This fee is 4% of the \$1.1 million fundraising goal.
- D. The value of paying off the mortgage was highlighted to save almost \$500,000 in interest charges that would be incurred if BLC continues to make monthly \$8,187 payments to January 1, 2039 to pay off the mortgage.

The following points were made in the discussion by the congregation:

- A. The current mortgage interest rate is 4%. Periodic interest rate revisions are made during the term of the mortgage as has already occurred. Interest rates will likely increase in the future given the national economic situation. This will further increase the cost of the mortgage.
- B. Previous capital campaign pledges have had a significant rate of actual payments by members.
- C. GSB will develop and coordinate the 2023 annual stewardship campaign in cooperation with the Stewardship Board.
- D. The interest savings of paying off the mortgage now were highlighted. The more we raise to pay off the principal, the more interest dollars we will save.
- E. GSB also encourages congregations to select an outreach project in addition to the mortgage payoff that will enhance the ministry and mission of the church. Possible ideas were identified.

Action: A motion was made by Bob Ihrig with a second by Derek Brown to approve the Council recommendation to contract with GSB Fundraising to lead and coordinate the 2022 BLC capital campaign. The motion was approved on a voice vote by all members in attendance.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pastor Jay Dahlvang led the membership in the Lord’s Prayer to close the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 11:41 am. Approved on a voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bob Ihrig, Congregation Secretary