



**Special Meeting of the Congregation
Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Mankato, Minnesota
August 21, 2022
10:55 – 11:50 AM**

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE: 125 (Quorum = 75)

1. CALL TO ORDER: President Mary Bliesmer

The meeting was called to order at 10:55 am with a quorum confirmed. Members were asked to sign-in on the attendance sheets at each table for official records.

2. OPENING PRAYER: Pastor Jay Dahlvang

3. WELCOME & OVERVIEW OF MEETING FORMAT: President Mary Bliesmer

Members were welcomed to the meeting. An overview of the planned meeting activities was presented.

4. CALL COMMITTEE PRESENTATION: Jill Contreras, Amy Haigh (Co-Chairpersons)

A. Review of Call Committee & Process

Jill Contreras explained the 4 stages involved in the 10-month call process:

1. Transition: Pr. Kristen Venne was employed to serve as transition pastor and to assist with the call process. The call committee was set up. The committee was grateful to the strategic planning committee for its work that provided needed information for the call process and Ministry Site Profile. The call committee was introduced: Jill Contreras, Amy Haigh, Evan MacLean, Derek Brown, Liz Paul, Carrol Meyers Dobler, Matt Drewitz (Council liaison). Their families were thanked for their support and understanding of committee responsibilities.
2. Self-Study: The required Ministry Site Profile was completed. This started with a meeting with Pr. Streed of the SE MN Synod to review the requirements for the Profile. The Strategic Planning Committee started its work to prepare a new strategic plan. A survey was completed by the congregation with results shared at a Sunday morning forum. This information was incorporated into the profile. The completed Profile was approved by the Council and sent to the synod.
3. Candidates Identified & Interviewed: Based upon the completed Profile, Pr. Streed identified the names of compatible prospective pastoral candidates. Background information on each candidate was shared with the committee. Zoom interviews were held with 4 candidates with Pr. Streed informed of the outcomes. 2 candidates were selected for second interviews.

One candidate withdrew from the Bethlehem process due to becoming a Candidate of Choice in a call process with another church. The remaining candidate's references were checked. Online sermons were viewed by the committee. Other relevant materials were reviewed. The candidate was given an in-person tour of the Mankato area. A meeting was held with Pr. Jay. The candidate had dinner with the committee and led devotions.

A conversational interview was held with questions discussed by the committee and the candidate. The Council developed and approved a compensation package that was shared with the candidate. The committee unanimously recommended a call for the candidate after the interview. This recommendation was sent to the Council for approved scheduling of a special congregational meeting to act upon the call.

4. Special Congregational Meeting: Held today to discuss and act upon the call.

B. Candidate Background

Amy Haigh provided background on the candidate Pr. Jacie Richmond. The pastor was born in Plymouth, MN and is a graduate of Gustavus Adolphus College and Luther Seminary. Pr. Richmond has served as an associate pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church in Owatonna for the past 5 years and is currently serving on the SE MN Synod table on social justice and on the board of Crossroads Campus Ministry. The pastor is committed to a sense of welcome, inclusivity and community involvement. Pr. Richmond was involved in starting a youth group at St. John's and worked to create connections with the community. Personal and professional strengths were reviewed. Pastoral themes are Teaching, Living & Loving.

Pr. Richmond was presented in a video personally prepared. Early background and education at Gustavus and Luther Seminary was reviewed. The pastor enjoys singing and playing several instruments along with gardening and coffee. The pastor has experience with children and youth in the church in confirmation, Vacation Bible School and a youth group. Pr. Richmond has participated in a variety of worship services and has ecumenical experiences with other churches. The pastor served an internship in the Minneapolis Cedar-Riverside community.

Three things struck Pr. Richmond about Bethlehem: 1. Our welcoming congregation; 2. Our commitment to inclusivity; 3. Our new strategic goal of embracing diversity. The personal philosophy of "Love God, Love your Neighbor" was noted. The pastor asked the BLC congregation to listen to the Holy Spirit as it voted today on the call.

C. Pastoral Call Recommendation

On behalf of the call committee, Amy Haigh presented the recommendation of a call to Pr. Jacie Richmond.

5. CONGREGATIONAL QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

President Mary Bliesmer and Call Committee Co-Chairpersons Amy Haigh & Jill Contreas responded to questions from members of the congregation about the candidate with the following information presented:

- Would start sometime in October.
- Has devoted past 5 years to church in Owatonna. Looking for new opportunities and possibilities at Bethlehem.
- Will be full-time at Bethlehem.

- Roles at Bethlehem would include providing the Word and Sacraments and working with older youth and young adults.
- Single.
- Wants to continue involvement in current synod activities.
- Positive work in a team ministry and collaborative.
- Understands and respects traditions.
- Owatonna church congregation is larger than BLC. 4 worship services held each week.
- Pr. Jay met with Pr. Richmond for a one-to-one interview and is comfortable about the prospect of working with Pr. Richmond.

6. REVIEW OF VOTING REQUIREMENTS & PROCESS

President Mary Bliesmer explained the voting requirements and process. This included the following BLC constitutional provisions:

A. BLC Constitutional Requirements - Chapter 9

***C9.01.** Authority to call a pastor shall be in this congregation by at least a two-thirds majority ballot vote of members present and voting at a meeting legally called for that purpose. Before a call is issued, the officers, or a committee elected by this congregation to recommend the call, shall seek the advice and help of the bishop of the synod.

***C9.02.** Only a member of the clergy roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a candidate for the roster of ordained ministers who has been recommended for the congregation by the synodical bishop may be called as a pastor of this congregation.

B. Voting Requirements

1. BLC Membership
2. Written Ballot
3. 2/3 Approval of Voting Members

C. Voting Tabulation Tellers & Process

Council members Jessica Auel, Aaron Geringer, Jason Bruns and Marie Slotemaker served as official tellers. They distributed a written ballot to each BLC member in attendance. Completed ballots were collected and tabulated.

7. VOTING RESULTS ANNOUNCEMENT

President Mary Bliesmer reported the following results of the congregational meeting:

YES: Approve the call 124 votes
 NO: Do not approve the call 1 vote

The congregational pastoral call was declared to be officially approved.

8. NEXT STEPS & TIMELINE IN CALL PROCESS

Jill Contreras reviewed the next steps to be followed in the call process. Synod call documents detailing the congregational vote and call approval will be signed by President Mary Bliesmer and Secretary Bob Ihrig. The Synod call documents must be approved and signed by our Bishop and then sent to the candidate, who then has 30 days to respond.

Pr. Richmond will be called today with the results of the vote. A start date at Bethlehem will be determined by the Council. The date of official installation of Pr. Richmond will be coordinated with the synod since it will be part of the process.

9. CLOSING PRAYER

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

10. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 11:50 am. Approved on a voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Ihrig, Congregation Secretary