

UNITY Lutheran Church

Annual Meeting 2024 Minutes

Sun., Feb. 25, 2024

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation was held in person at both campuses, with live streaming, and via Zoom. **Members present in all locations: 221**

- **Quorum achieved (189 needed)**

Meeting called to order by Council President Colleen King at 9:33 a.m.

Pr. John Horner-Ibler led the opening devotion, observing that it is possible to be in many places and, yet, united in the Spirit and in a common purpose.

Approval of Minutes

- Annual Meeting on Feb. 26, 2023

Motion to approve Minutes: MSA (motioned, seconded, approved)

Pastors' Reports

- Pr. John Horner-Ibler
- Pr. Sherrie Lorbeck
- Pr. Muriel Otto
- 2023 Member Statistics & Pastoral Acts

Pr. John reflected on how the relationship between Cross of Life (COL) and Christ the King (CTK) began in 2001-'02 when renovations were happening at the COL campus and space was needed for Vacation Bible School (VBS) that summer. He observed that it took courage for COL to ask for the opportunity to use space at CTK. As things turned out, CTK recommended that we jointly host VBS. Pr. John observed that it took generosity of spirit for CTK to extend the invitation and to be accepting and welcoming. Our strength continues to be a spirit of "doing it together" in so many ways.

Motion to approve Pastors' Reports and pastoral acts: MSA

Congregation Council's Reports

- Congregational President – Colleen King
- Adult Programs – Susie Sprecher
- Christian Education – Davida Kroepfl
- Communications & Technology – Ed Dominski
- Finance – Phil Roemaat
- Treasurer – Adrienne Krueger
- Group Opportunities – Tiffany Reay
- Invite – Anna Jansson
- Property – David Koenen

- Servant Ministries – Jackie Herington
- Stewardship – Trisha Smith
- Worship & Music – Steve Johnson
- Youth – Eric Borkenhagen
- Recording Secretary – Leslie O’Connell

Motion to approve Council Reports: MSA

Program Staff Reports

- Director of Christian Education – Michelle Aprahamian
- Director of Adult Programs – Matt Griepentrog
- Director of Music Ministry – Lynn Key
- Member Care – Jim Ahlquist
- Director of Communications – Natalie Kamenick

Motion to approve Staff Reports: MSA

Introduction of Council Members

2023 Financial Report – Phil Roemaat

- Income Statement – Year ended Dec. 31, 2023
- Revenue and Expenses – Year ended Dec. 31, 2023
- Five-year trend of Budget vs. Actual
- Giving and Spending Pie Chart – Year ended Dec. 31, 2023

Phil summarized that the congregation continues to be in very good shape financially, thanks to the generosity of members in their giving. There was some caution about the budget going into December 2023. Members responded in force, resulting in the strongest giving in December in history. We ended 2023 with a surplus of \$34,480. Phil noted that the allocation of expenditures (p. 39 in annual report) is consistent year over year. As detailed in the Fund Balances (p. 37), we have approximately \$517,000 in cash, putting us in a healthy position.

In regard to the Backyard Project, Phil pointed out the Summary of the Backyard Project, Jan. 2019 – Feb. 2024, which provides a snapshot of income and expenses. The project is complete.

Phil reminded the Congregation that the COL mortgage is at a 3.65% interest rate and will be paid in full by the end of 2027 – just three years from now.

- **Allocation of 2023 Surplus (\$34,480):** Phil shared that Council has recommended that 25% of surplus be allocated to Benevolence and that 75% be held in reserve and allocated to anticipated expenses for the Call Process, including travel of candidates and relocation of two pastors.

Phil invited questions on the 2023 budget and surplus. Hearing none, there was a motion to approve the 2023 budget and allocation of 2023 surplus. MSA.

- **2024 Budget:** Phil then presented the proposed 2024 budget, which anticipates a 4% increase in revenue from member giving. He indicated that the budget includes an increase to advance Pr. Sherrie and Pr. Muriel closer to the Synod salary guideline (based on tenure). The budget includes

12.5% for Benevolence, consistent with 2023, and \$5,000 for the Call Process. He also noted that 2024 will be a year of “known unknowns” with the transition of Pr. John and Pr. Muriel and the Call of two pastors. Phil paused for questions.

Question: Does the 2023 surplus get applied to the 2024 expenses? **Answer:** No

Question: How far are pastor salaries from the Synod guidelines? **Answer:** For tenure of 6-14 years, salaries are to be within 96% of guideline. For tenure of 15+ years, salaries are to be within 92% of guideline.

Question: What accounts for the difference between budget and actual for salaries and benefits in 2023? **Answer:** Open Youth Director position and two staff members coming off of the benefits plan.

Question: How do UNITY’s reserves compare with Synod recommendations. **Answer:** It is unknown whether there is a Synod recommendation for reserves. UNITY has one month’s expenses for church operations in reserve.

Motion to approve the 2024 Budget. MSA

Update from the Call Team

Melanie Varin introduced Call Team members and provided a brief update on the work of the Team to date. She thanked the Congregation for active participation in the recent input sessions to help shape the profile that will be provided to the Synod. She outlined that three committees have been formed: Congregational Input; Ministry Site Profile (MSP); and Communications. Melanie thanked Ann Hill for her active support of the Call Team, creating a dedicated section of the UNITY website with information relevant to the process.

Call Team members Matt Jolliff and Jessica Schrieber provided an update on the MSP. The Synod provides a form for the congregation to describe itself – including who it is, along with mission and vision. Matt and Jessica also shared three options for a key piece – the summary description (limited to 75 words). The Team shared a draft of the MSP today and invites congregational feedback on both the MSP and the summary description. These will be available through the UNITY website. Once finalized, they will be approved by the team, by Council and then submitted to the Synod so that candidates can initiate next steps.

Melanie also shared that the Call Team will search for an interim pastor to provide supplemental support and bridge the transition. She extended thanks to Pr. John and Pr. Muriel for their years of service, adding that there will be celebrations to come.

Melanie closed by thanking the congregation for its prayers and support. She encouraged outreach to any Call Team member with thoughts and feedback.

Elections

Nominating Team for Spring 2024: Todd Blatnik, Jim Johnsen, Fred Varin

Synod Assembly delegates for May 2024 will be: John Allar, Melissa Bemus, Mary Huss, Aaron Prohuska, Trisha Smith

Old Business

Backyard Project is complete.

New Business

None.

Motion for adjournment. MSA. Colleen King adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:18 a.m.

Pr. Sherrie concluded the meeting with a prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Leslie O'Connell, recording secretary