

CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
Agenda for January 8, 2019
Upper Room

- A. Call to Order
- B. Opening Prayer - Barry Graham
- C. Approve Current Agenda
- D. Approve minutes of the Congregational Council meeting of December 11, 2018
- E. Bible Study
- F. New Business
 - 1. Motion to Waiver the Performance and Payment Bond
 - 2. Motion to advance the Annual Budget to the Congregational Meeting
 - 3. Motion to establish a Mortgage Transition Fund as a Fund II Account.
 - 4. Motion to allocate money to cover the 2018 budget deficit of \$15,220.85
 - 5. Nominating Committee - Slate Mathes
- H. Old Business
 - 1. Building Process Update - Brian, Pastor Dan, Barry
 - 2. Welcoming efforts/feedback - all
 - 3. Open Comment Period
- G. Treasurer's Report - Brian Niebuhr
- J. Staff Reports
- K. Committee Reports
- L. Closing Prayer - Barry Graham
- M. Adjournment

Executive Committee: February 5, 2019
Next Council Meeting: February 12, 2019
Setup and Prayers for Next Meeting:

Information Items

	Baptized	Confirmed
1. MEMBERSHIP as of December 1, 2018	1209	997
Members received in December:		
A. by baptism (15 years and under)		
B. by baptism (adult)		
C. transfer from ELCA congregation		
D. other Lutheran		
E. affirmation of faith		
F. transfer from non-Lutheran congregation		
G. other and statistical adjustment		
 2. Members Removed		
Members removed in December:		
A. death	1	1
B. transfer to ELCA congregation		
C. transfer to non-Lutheran congregation		
D. other and statistical adjustment		
 MEMBERSHIP as of December 31, 2018	 1208	 996

Average Attendance

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
December	675	567	604	640	619	609	720	720	564	537	565
Added:											
Baptism:											
Affirmation:											
Transfer:											
Other:											
 Removed:											
Death: Doug Zatechka											
Transfer:											
Dropped Due to Inactivity:											
Other:											

Congregational Council Meeting

First Lutheran Church

December 11, 2018

MEMBERS PRESENT: Natalie Peters, Pastor Dan Warnes, Jennifer Nelson, Mike McDannel, Rebecca Pfabe, Dawn Brock, Barry Graham, Slate Mathes, Mary Rogge, Barb Johnson Frank, Kim Cordonier, Matt Peters, Kim Hall, Pastor Justin Eller Brian Niebuhr, Priscilla Hayden-Roy, Judy Bailey,

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Sunni Richardson, Sharon Hardel, Bryan Hanson

MEETING RECORDER: Ann Carlson

- A. **CALL TO ORDER:** President, Barry Graham, called the meeting to order at 7:00.
- B. **OPENING PRAYER:** Dawn led the opening prayer.
- C. **APPROVE CURRENT AGENDA:** It was moved and seconded to approve the current agenda. The motion passed.
- D. **APPROVE MINUTES OF THE CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING OF NOVEMBER 13, 2018:** It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes from the November meeting. The motion passed.
- E. **BIBLE STUDY:** Council members discussed Christmas traditions.
- F. **NEW BUSINESS:**
 1. **Nominating Committee – Slate Mathes**

Slate stated that 60% of the positions have candidate names. The Committee is still making calls. Some potential candidates are saying no. Reasons given are generally the time commitment needed and others because they may not be elected.
 2. **Electronic Payments Motion – Pastor Justin**

It was moved by Pastor Justin Eller and the Executive Committee and then seconded to approve the opening of another checking account, connected to but separate from our current one, with US Bank for the purposes of receiving digital payment/donations. Authorize Congregational Accountant, Bryan Hanson, to open the account for First Lutheran Church. Discussion followed.

 - At the present time, First Lutheran Church only accepts cash or checks. FLC is looking for a digital means to accept donations as we are likely missing out on donations because many members do not carry cash or a checkbook.
 - Venmo is one option. It is a digital wallet that lets someone make and share payments with friends. There is no fee, but the transaction must be Venmo to Venmo.

- A debit card could be used with Square. The fee is 2.75% for each swipe and the fee is deducted from the total amount.
- Some congregations have a giving kiosk.
- Within our website, the giving page allows payments via ACH or credit card.
- Opening the secondary checking account would provide an additional layer of security and would make it easier to track the electronic receipts.
- Both Venmo and Square are free to sign up, but they require a checking account in which to deposit received or transferred funds.

The motion passed.

G. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Building Process Update – Brian Niebuhr, Pastor Dan, Barry Graham
 - a. Final Drawings – RDG has completed the final drawings and submitted them to the City of Lincoln for the appropriate permits. Final approval should take place in the next two weeks.
 - b. Roof Cleaning – completed
 - c. Asbestos Abatement – completed
 - d. Building Project Costs – Hampton Construction has received final bids and costs for the project. Miraculously, after some additional and unexpected costs (a \$70,000 sprinkling system in the sanctuary), the total cost of the project is \$3.997 million. This includes all the costs we have incurred at this point. It includes a 3% contingency factor and a \$25,000 performance bond. The Building Committee will bring a proposal to the Council regarding the Performance Bond. This means we are within budget!
 - e. Construction – work will begin as soon as permits are approved
 - f. Duration of construction – Hampton Construction informed us that this project will take 14 months to complete. It can be done in two phases.
 - i. Phase I – new nursery/restrooms, kitchen, and preschool rooms
 - ii. Phase II – sanctuary, gathering area and offices
 - iii. The ramp sidewalk near the chapel will be completed in the next few weeks.
 - Next Monday, the Committee will meet with a pew manufacturer, who is in Beatrice.
 - Pastor Dan also mentioned that the manager of Clocktower Mall is requesting that we revisit our policy of keeping the northwest gate closed, except on Sundays, First Friday Jazz days and large weddings or funerals. The current policy has been in place for several decades. Pastor thinks that it is time to reconsider the policy and explore other possibilities. This topic will be discussed with the Property Committee, Executive Committee as well as Clocktower Management.
2. Stewardship Update & Budget Listening Post – Pastor Dan

Comments from the Listening Posts:

 - Plan sounded like a good idea. One table of members would rather reduce the tithe from the ELCA contribution rather than the local contributions.
 - Members feel closer to our local charities than to the ELCA.
 - We need to be thoughtful with cuts.

- Members want us to reach out to explain a reduction in giving.
- Dimensions would increase the liability for the Church
 - *We have not yet checked with our carrier. It is Bryan's understanding that Dimensions has their own insurance carrier.*
- Members liked the conversation and the complete and transparent presentation.
- Some members liked the idea of volunteers on Mondays. A volunteer coordinator, someone not on staff, would be needed.
- There will be a change in utility costs as areas will be zoned and timed to reduce energy costs.
- We need to start charging groups who use our building as well as being proactive to state that we have meeting space available.
- Members could assist with landscape design or donating or assisting with the plantings.
- Members could do painting.
- Members appreciated the chance to visit.
- Are there tax consequences for charging for meeting space? Could there be a suggested donation for meeting space?
- What have we already paid toward the building project?
- Where does the money go?
- Members like the idea of an annual listening post.
- Why would we want to put excess funds in savings rather than paying down the mortgage?
- What is the timeline as to when spaces within the building will be unavailable for use?
 - *When Mike from Hampton gets back to work, there will be a schedule.*
- Members at another table were opposed to cutting any of the benevolences. It is a temporary step down and step up. There is the fear that once something is reduced, it will not be increased again.
- Members at another table saw benevolence reductions as the third option if the first two do not work out. Having a soft campaign would be a higher option. FLC has a history of making a double tithe. The Congregation should be challenged to give more. We don't need to reduce benevolences if people are challenged.
- Members are advocates of long-range plans, so we aren't operating in a crisis mode.
- How do young families fit into all of this, especially when their finances are tight? Gifts of time are very valuable too. Some of these words of wisdom could be used during the stewardship drive.

Comments on the 2019 budgeting process:

- Bryan likes the idea of the ten-year plan.
- Another idea might be that if the Endowment Committee has some extra funds that they could be given to charitable organizations that may have been shorted if we temporarily reduce our double tithe.

- Brian mentioned that in addition to the double tithe, FLC also receives and passes through donations to designated charities.
- We have not yet had the discussion as to how the double tithe might be allocated if it is reduced.
- The Budget Committee needs some guidance and will focus on 18% of receipts as they prepare their budget.
- As the 2019 budget is prepared, the Committee will plan on the receipts being flat.
- The next budget meeting is next week.
- Five pledges have been received since the last meeting.

3. Welcoming Efforts/Feedback

- There were people at the Listening Posts who did not know each other.
- Some members are regularly signing up as greeters.

4. Lifelong Learning Update – Pastor Justin & Natalie Peters

- The first draft of the plan has been completed and passed to program staff for a first glance. Next, it will go to the Lifelong Learning Plan Task Force (the actual group charged with making this happen) and will then be presented to Council and made available to the Congregation.
- The Task Force will continue their work through May. They will develop information to add to our website from the documents.
- Natalie gave kudos to Sunni for her work with Learning.
- Natalie discussed learning in Faith Trek, middle school and senior high.
- Sunni mentioned that the Serve Team incorporates Learning into their work.

5. Open Comment Period

The Mission Investment Fund (MIF) requires a Performance Bond on all construction related loans over \$500,000. Ministries requesting a loan of under \$5 million can request a waiver of the Payment and Performance Bond. Bond waiver requests are reviewed on a case by case basis. Work should not be started until a Bond is in place or a waiver has been granted. The notion of putting a bond in place and then removing it may not be a favorable idea. There is no cost to waive the bond.

Dawn suggested that we ask Hampton to begin to put together the required documentation to waive the Bond, so the paperwork is ready for a vote at the January Council meeting.

We have a 3% contingency built into our plans.

A bottom line consideration is the financial strength of Hampton.

A \$25,000 bond is very small. Hampton is a very reliable contractor.

Members have strong opinions on both sides. The chances of the Bond being invoked are very small. We have a duty to protect the money gifted by the congregation.

H. TREASURER'S REPORT – Brian Niebuhr:

YTD receipts through November 30 are under budget by \$38,311. YTD expenses through November 30 are under budget by \$14,415. The YTD deficit through November 30 is \$23,896.

I. STAFF REPORTS:

Sharon asked everyone to attend the Christmas program on Sunday.

J. COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

K. CLOSING PRAYER: Dawn led the closing prayer.

L. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 9:04.

Minutes of the Congregational Council Executive Meeting
January 2, 2019 7:00 p.m.

Present: Barry Graham, Kim Hall, Brian Niebuhr, Pastor Dan Wames, Barb Johnson Frank

Pastor Dan opened the meeting with prayer.

Agenda Items Considered for Council Meeting

- a. Proposed motion regarding a surety bond: The group considered a draft motion that recommended against purchasing a surety bond, as well as a letter received from congregant Jerry Westhoff, recommending that a bond be purchased. Pastor Dan will speak with another local pastor or two who has experience with construction at their church and the Synod attorney prior to the Council meeting. A written ballot was suggested.
- b. Motion to Adopt the Budget for the Coming Year: Budget Committee will meet on January 3 to outline options.
- c. Nominating Committee Report
- d. Building Update
- e. Building Use During Construction: Alternative spaces for Faith Trek have been designated and will be used immediately. Other plans, for worship, etc. can be made, now that construction has begun. Phase I is 4-6 months.
- f. Preparation for Annual Meeting Pre-Sessions (2): Both meetings will present the slate of nominees, as well provide for conversation about the proposed budget and temporary reductions.

Respectfully submitted,
Barb Johnson Frank

MEETING DATE: January 8, 2019

SUBJECT: Performance and Payment Bond Waiver

PROPOSED ACTION: To authorize the application for a waiver of the requirement to obtain a performance and payment bond for the building project.

BACKGROUND: Our mortgage provider for the building project, the ELCA Mission Investment Fund (MIF), requires that we either obtain a performance and payment bond for our project or that we apply for a waiver. The waiver application requires both us and Hampton Enterprises to supply information to the MIF to demonstrate financial stability.

A performance bond is a surety bond acquired by the general contractor for our benefit, guaranteeing that they will finish the project according to the contract. A payment bond is a surety bond acquired by the general contractor for the benefit of subcontractors that guarantees that they will be paid.

Performance and payment bonds are nearly always required on public projects for two reasons: 1. Public projects are typically required to take the lowest bid for a project, which makes those projects vulnerable to using contractors that are financially unstable. 2. Liens cannot be issued against public property making it difficult for subcontractors to obtain payment if the general contractor becomes insolvent.

Some private projects obtain performance and payment bonds and others do not. The benefit to obtaining a performance and payment bond is that if Hampton is unable to complete the project or does not pay its subcontractors, we have no additional liability and the surety company will ensure that the project is completed according to the original contract without liens on our property. The drawback to obtaining the bond is the cost of the bond.

The reasons for seeking the waiver are as follows:

1. Hampton is an established company that has been in business for over 70 years. In that entire history they have never had to execute on a performance and payment bond.

2. A representative from the Mission Investment Fund indicated that nearly all of the projects that they fund request and obtain a bond waiver. That representative indicated to us that First Lutheran's historical financial performance is strong and that the funding for our project is sufficient. Therefore a bond would not be required in our case.

3. In the event that Hampton cannot complete the project, we have the financial resources to ensure that the project is completed. If Hampton is unable to complete the project, our additional cost is only the cost difference required to bring in another contractor to finish the project. In this unlikely event, we have enough financial stability to absorb any additional costs incurred. We can and should additionally limit our liability by requesting lien waivers monthly from Hampton to ensure that subcontractors are being paid and will not be placing liens on our property.

COST/SOURCE:

No cost. Not obtaining a performance and payment bond will save approximately \$25,000 on the cost of the building project. Taking this action could increase our liability by an unknown amount should Hampton Enterprises become insolvent before the completion of our project.

SPONSOR:

Brian Niebuhr, Treasurer

MEETING DATE: January 8, 2019

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2019 Budget

PROPOSED ACTION: The Church Council of First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lincoln, Nebraska approve the proposed 2019 Ministry Budget.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS: The 2019 Ministry Budget recommended by the Finance Committee is based on total receipts and expenditures of \$990,000.

Projected offering receipts of \$974,800 represents a 0.05% increase over 2018 actual results (\$974,314).

Total Benevolence/Serving giving of \$175,464 represents 18% of projected offering receipts, with 12.6% to the ELCA & Nebraska Synod (\$122,825) and 5.4% to local benevolences (\$52,639).

Program expenses (Worship, Learning and Hospitality/Care) total \$41,454; 0.08% increase over 2018 actual expenses (\$41,422).

Support expenses total \$773,082; 0.64% increase over 2018 actual expenses (\$768,161).

SPONSORS: Brian Niebuhr, Congregational Council Treasurer on behalf of the Finance Committee, supported by the Executive Committee members Pastor Dan Warnes, Pastor Justin Eller, Barry Graham, Kim Hall, Barbara Johnson Frank (in addition to Al Seagren, Steve Janssen and Bryan Hanson, Finance Committee members)

**FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
2019 Budget**

	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Budget
RECEIPTS			
Envelope Receipts	976,761	967,689	968,000
Loose Receipts	6,356	6,380	6,500
Sunday School	267	245	300
Offering Receipts	983,384	974,314	974,800
Misc & Building Use	5,818	7,911	8,200
Thrivent Choice Funds (Fund II transfer if needed)	6,357	7,000	7,000
Other Receipts	12,175	14,911	15,200
TOTAL RECEIPTS	995,559	989,225	990,000

	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Budget
EXPENSES			
ELCA & Nebraska Synod Benevolence	147,508	136,404	122,825
<i>% of Offering Receipts</i>	<i>15.00%</i>	<i>14.00%</i>	<i>12.60%</i>

	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Budget
Benevolence / Serving			
Vicar Program (1/2)	3,618	-	
World Hunger	8,000	8,000	
LWR Disaster Relief	500	500	
BackPack Program	6,300	5,400	
Lutheran Food Pantry	1,500	1,500	
Bread For The World	500	500	
Global Mission In Action (GMIA)	4,000	3,000	
Lutheran Family Services	3,800	3,000	
Matt Talbot Kitchen	1,500	1,451	
Fresh Start	2,500	2,000	
Tabitha (Meals on Wheels)	5,000	3,385	
Prison Ministry / Bridges To Hope	2,800	2,250	
UNL Lutheran Center	4,000	1,000	
UNL Capital Campaign	-	20,000	
UNL Intern Support	-	5,000	
Nebraska Campus Lutheran Ministries	1,000	1,000	
LMIA Discretionary	1,478	473	
Benevolence / Serving: Total	46,496	58,459	52,639
<i>% of Offering Receipts</i>	<i>4.73%</i>	<i>6.00%</i>	<i>5.40%</i>

ELCA / Nebraska Synod, Benevolence / Serving	194,004	194,863	175,464
Grand Total % of Offering Receipts	19.73%	20.00%	18.00%

FUND II Benevolence Giving 12 mos 2018	
Food Pantry / World Hunger	\$ 3,964
Lutheran Family Services	\$ 2,365
Kicks for Kids (cash)	\$ 2,080
Noisy Offerings	\$ 1,170
Pastor's & Soc Min discretionary fund	\$ 2,800
BackPack program	\$ 7,130
Endowment fund	\$ 3,890
Gifts of Hope	\$ 8,475
Advent & Lent meal donations	\$ 1,176
Other	\$ 1,884
	\$ 34,934

Worship	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Budget
Devotional Materials	278	244	250
Worship Supplies	6,115	6,274	5,200
Celebration/Speakers	-	150	-
Music Honoraria	1,150	850	800
Worship Decorations	43	-	50
Music/Choir	2,692	3,460	3,400
Music Conferences/Workshops	510	500	500
Organ/Piano Maintenance	763	1,890	1,500
Choir Fellowship	156	150	150
Drama Ministry	-	75	-
Worship: Total	11,707	13,593	11,850
% of Offering Receipts	1.19%	1.40%	1.22%

Learning	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Budget
Early Childhood	-	671	700
Elementary	2,805	2,603	2,600
Middle School	1,751	3,021	3,800
High School	10,367	7,359	7,400
Adults	1,095	615	700
Library & Media	279	279	279
The Lutheran	4,018	3,941	3,975
Advocacy	-	-	50
Creation Care	12	100	100
Learning: Total	20,327	18,589	19,604
% of Offering Receipts	2.07%	1.91%	2.01%

Hospitality / Care	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Budget
Hospitality	7,196	6,323	6,250
Stewardship	1,280	1,148	1,150
Fellowship	250	250	250
Funeral Lunches	(186)	46	100
Stephen Ministry	1,270	1,497	2,000
God's Work Our Hands	536	(24)	250
Hospitality / Care: Total	10,346	9,240	10,000
% of Offering Receipts	1.05%	0.95%	1.03%

Staffing Changes:

2017	H Widner - 6.5 mos. / S Hardel - 2.5 mos. (No Youth Director - 3 mos.) B Johnson - 6 mos. / M & B Bacon - 6 mos.
2018	Full staff all year

	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Budget
Support			
Compensation	448,355	463,370	472,500
Pension/Health Insurance	137,588	132,712	132,160
FICA Payroll Tax	37,396	37,819	38,767
Continuing Education	4,750	5,000	5,000
Pastors Professional Expense	468	275	400
Staff Professional Expense	150	190	300
Vicar Program (1/2)	3,618	-	-
Staff Hospitality	722	591	500
Staff Development	709	297	300
Conferences/Workshops (staff)	1,587	1,924	2,000
Synod Assembly (non-staff)	1,734	1,877	1,900
Auto & Travel	10,998	11,390	11,350
Call Relocation	3,717	-	-
Postage	3,029	3,047	2,850
Background Checks	16	640	150
Office Supplies	5,945	5,097	5,250
Banking Fees	1,857	1,711	1,800
Communications	3,698	2,704	2,500
Printer Expense	5,737	6,651	6,600
Computer Needs	3,406	1,289	900
Insurance	18,239	17,738	18,300
Utilities/Telephone	32,159	42,129	34,455
Janitorial Supplies	1,883	1,858	2,000
Repairs & Maintenance	18,012	16,279	12,000
Maintenance Reserve Fund	7,500	6,000	5,000
Mortgage Transition Fund	-	-	9,900
Service Contracts	4,634	3,653	3,700
Lawn Care/Snow Removal	1,768	3,920	2,500
Support: Total	759,175	768,161	773,082
% of Offering Receipts	77.20%	78.84%	79.31%

TOTAL EXPENSES	995,559	1,004,446	990,000
-----------------------	----------------	------------------	----------------

TOTAL RECEIPTS	995,559	989,225	990,000
-----------------------	----------------	----------------	----------------

	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Budget
RECEIPTS LESS EXPENSES	-	(15,221) DEFICIT	-

MEETING DATE: January 8, 2019

SUBJECT: Mortgage Transition Fund

PROPOSED ACTION: To establish a Mortgage Transition Fund as a Fund II account. This fund will initially be funded with \$13,000 from an undesignated member gift.

BACKGROUND: During our listening post discussions we proposed the idea of beginning to save money in a Mortgage Transition Fund. That fund will be used to help supplement the budget during the years when we begin to add the mortgage to our annual budget. Over time the mortgage transition fund will be drawn down to zero as we absorb the full cost of the mortgage in our annual budget.

Our ten-year plan specified that we we would also contribute part of our annual budget each year to the Mortgage Transition Fund until we begin to make payments on the mortgage. This annual budget allocation to the mortgage transition fund will be part of the proposed 2019 budget.

COST/SOURCE: \$13,000 will be transferred from an undesignated member gift to the Mortgage Transition Fund.

SPONSOR: Brian Niebuhr, Treasurer, on behalf of the Finance Committee

MEETING DATE: January 8, 2019

SUBJECT: 2018 Budget Deficit Resolution

PROPOSED ACTION: Allocate money to cover the 2018 budget deficit of \$15,220.85.

The proposed sources of these funds are:

1. Transfer some expenses from the Repairs/Maintenance expenses to the Maintenance Reserve fund		\$6050.46
Lawn sprinkler repair	\$936.23	
Replace damaged roof tiles	\$763.00	
Furnace repair	\$4351.23	
2. Transfer money from undesignated member gifts		\$5254.88
Member gift 1	\$3171.80	
Member gift 2	\$2083.08	
	Total:	\$11,305.34

Further we propose that the remaining balance of \$3915.51 be funded with additional transfers from Repairs/Maintenance expenses to the Maintenance Reserve Fund.

BACKGROUND: After slightly lower than expected receipts in 2018 and a few unexpected expenses in December we ended the year with a deficit. To balance the books we need to reallocate funds to end the year with a \$0 deficit.

Should an amendment be brought to change the source of the \$3915.51 balance, additional possible funding options are to use in whole or in part are:

1. Nebraska Synod benevolence	\$4872.00 (13.5% of receipts) or \$2436.00 (13.75% of receipts)
2. Local benevolence	\$974.31 (5.9% of receipts)
3. Lenten, Advent, and Thanksgiving Eve special offerings	\$1390.26

COST/SOURCE: \$15,220.85 must be shifted from Fund II accounts or reductions in year-end 2018 spending as specified above to bring our 2018 Fund I deficit to \$0.

SPONSOR: Brian Niebuhr, Treasurer, on behalf of the Finance Committee

**Council Report
January 8, 2019
Pastor Dan Warnes**

1. Building Project.

- a. **Final Permit.** RDG has completed the final drawings and submitted them to the city of Lincoln for the appropriate permits. As of January 3, 2019 we do not have the official permit for the project. This is primarily due to holiday vacations, etc.
 - b. **Construction.** We are, however, under construction. Hampton has begun to do some things that are not be dependent upon a permit; some demolition of unnecessary walls and construction of temporary walls, setting up the construction office, and contacting alarm system companies and others affected by the project.
 - c. **Building Project Costs.** Hampton Construction has received final bids and costs for the project. We've arrived at a GMP (Guaranteed Maximum Price) the total cost of the project is \$3997 million. This includes a 3% contingency fund and the \$25,000 performance bond. *This means we are within budget!*
 - d. **Duration of Construction.** Hampton Construction informs us that this project will take 14 months to complete. It will be done in two phases.
 - i. Phase 1- New nursery/restrooms, kitchen, and preschool rooms.
 - ii. Phase 2- Sanctuary gathering area, and offices.
 - iii. The ramp/sidewalk near the chapel will be completed in the next few weeks.
- 2. Finance Committee.** Thanks to Chairperson, Brian Niebuhr, and committee members Bryan Hanson, Steve Janssen, Pastor Justin, Pastor Dan, and all the staff and volunteers who have offered information for the budget.
- 3. Listening Post.** Thanks for listening to the concerns and ideas at the Listening Post event. This kind of genuine consultation with our fellow congregants builds trust in our leaders.
- 4. Advent.** Thanks to our Advent speakers, cantors, musicians, and everyone who helped make our "Until All are Fed" Advent series so meaningful.
- 5. Northwest gate.** The manager of Clocktower Mall is requesting we revisit our policy of keeping the northwest gate closed except on Sundays, First Friday Jazz days, and large weddings or funerals. The current policy has been in place for several decades. I think it's time to reconsider the policy and explore other possibilities. We'll be in conversation with Clocktower management, our Property Committee, and Executive Committee about other options.
- 6.** I performed two funerals since our last meeting.
- 7.** I was on vacation January 4-6, 2019.

**Respectfully Submitted,
Pastor Dan Warnes**

First Lutheran Church Council Report
December 21, 2018
Rev. Justin Eller

- 1. Advent mid-week worship services.** What a wonderful season Advent was! My great thanks to Masako and all who offered their musical gifts. This year, during the mealtimes, we had quotes and questions for guided conversation. This had been a request from the Welcoming Task Force of Council. It was a joy to get to know more folks through these conversations. Many thanks to all who prepared food throughout Advent!
- 2. Dinner+Learning #5B.** We met for Dinner+Learning to finish our theme of sacraments from Luther's Small Catechism. Since this D+L fell on an Advent evening, the families joined other congregation members for the meal, they attended the Advent mid-week worship together, and then we used the last hour for our intentional learning time. We kept the students and parents together this month and Sharon showed them a video, lead them on an amazing race game, and then we closed the hour in the sanctuary with Q&A about holy communion. The kids and their parents asked really good questions; some about how we believe the mystery of the sacrament and others asked about our practice. Jenna Troutman helped out this month with the game.
- 3. HSYG Summer Accompaniment Experience Orientation.** During our December orientation, we reviewed the 5 Values of the ELCA's Accompaniment Model: Mutuality, Empowerment, Vulnerability, Inclusivity, and Sustainability. The students and trip chaperones created skits, songs, and poems to teach the values to the rest of the group. Then we opened up the discussions so they could process how these values actually work in daily life. We spent the "Spanish Hour" reading kids' book in Spanish to one another and playing Scrabble and Guess Who in Spanish.
- 4. Digital payment.** Bryan Hanson and I met with Amanda Mogul from US Bank to talk about their competitive option to the Square for digital payments. Since they sale their card swipper/chip reader/Apple&Samsung pay device for \$49, we decided to start slowly with the Square since it's free. We will explore over time if the Square is enough for our needs and perhaps down the road, we may look at US Bank to help us take digital payments and donations to the next level.
- 5. Pastoral matters.** December saw several different pastoral matters from new member conversations, early wedding planning, a memorial service, hospital visits, and the birth of a son to church members.
- 6. Forgiveness Project.** I met with Pr. Steve Mason, who is also on the Faith Coalition of Lancaster County Board with me, to discuss a *40-days of Forgiveness* interfaith devotional that he and I will lead. We will be inviting community faith leaders to contribute reflections. This devotional will accompany the *Forgiveness Project* that will display their exhibit at Gateway Mall, April 23-May 14. The Forgiveness Project collects and shares stories from individuals and communities who have rebuilt their lives following hurt and trauma.
- 7. Micah 6:8.** The Nebraska Synod Micah 6:8 Team met to continue planning our synod-wide "listening posts" for congregations to share where they are already engaged in global mission, world hunger awareness, and justice issues. They will also be asked about issues facing their local communities and how the Micah Team might help equip and walk alongside them to address their identified issues.

Respectfully submitted,
Pastor Justin

First Lutheran Church – Council Report January 2019

Sunni Richardson, Deacon – Director of Discipleship

FaithTrek

Epiphany is the word of the month for January. We will start with the Christmas story complete with the Wisemen in place. Then we will be learning how we can be the light of Christ in the world and learning to see the light of Christ in others. Masako is doing a Sunday week of special music with each age group. Judy Bailey has orchestrated a drama with each of the characters of the nativity story coming forth to offer a gift. It is great to have these extras for the kids along with the support and guidance of our consistently caring FaithTrek Guides.

Adult Learning

Pastor Dan reminded us all that First Lutheran is a congregation grounded in lifelong learning. Add Bible study, small group discussion group or the adult forum to your 2019 lifelong learning plans as a Disciple. Need help finding a place to connect? Got a new idea? Have a topic or book or movie you would like to discuss? Just call me – let's talk! Thanks to the leaders that keep things moving with our many adult learning opportunities.

Nominating Committee

Nominating got a late start this year but has come through with a great slate of candidates for Synod Assembly, Council, Endowment Board and the Nominating Committee. Thanks to those who felt the call to serve and offered their name on the ballot. In 2019 the plan is to have Nominating Committee meet at least once in the spring for orientation/training and begin their work in August.

Preschool Supplies

Thanks to Judy Batterman for logging many hours helping me sort and organize the preschool and FaithTrek supplies and equipment so we were ready to move things out on December 29. Karen and Steve Lenzen took many loads of toys to Capital City Christian for their monthly give-away. And a special thanks to all the volunteers who showed up December 29 to move things to the pods and to our new spring classrooms. I don't have all the names but I know there was a bundle of great folks helping that day.

Discipleship Plans

The names from the Discipleship Plans are being distributed to team leaders. They will be contacting each person by phone, email or postcard to tell you how to get connected with the ministries you checked on your Discipleship Plan. Excited and don't want to wait for someone to contact you? Just call the point person listed on the web site or contact me. You don't have to wait to be invited in – you are always welcome!

Gifts of Hope Tally & Thank You

Mosaic	\$826.00
Photos	\$681.50
Holy Land	\$655.50
Fair Trade	\$794.65
Backpack	\$1,420.00
S. Sudan	\$1,355.50
Good Gifts	\$2,641.50
	<hr/>
	\$8,474.65
	<hr/> <hr/>

Director of Worship and Music

Masako Bacon

December, 2018

There are so many places for musicians during Advent and Christmas season. We are so blessed with many dedicated people who share their music so generously. Some people served consecutive Sundays. We are so grateful of their musical gifts but also, even more so, for their dedication to God and to our church.

December Musicians:

12/1, 8, 22, 29 - Christine Carman (Saturday pianist)

12/2 – 8:15 -Trombone Quartet (Matt Reckmeyer, Spencer Janssen, Luke Anderson, Steve Janssen)

10:45 – Brian & Erin Niebuhr

12/5 – Cantors (Noon – Gordon Youngquist/6:30- Kristi Fisher)

12/9- 8:15 – Chorister Choir, String Quartet (Anna Kruse, Becca Simley, Brian Niebuhr, Lucas Culbertson)

10:45 – Adult Choir, Priscilla Hayden-Roy

Both – String Ensemble (Navy Mathes, Grace Niebuhr, Jenna Troutman, Anna Kruse, Xander Niebuhr, Becca Simley, Brian & Will Niebuhr, Lucas Culbertson, Bennett Bacon)

12/12 - Cantors (Noon – Sharon Hardel/6:30-Becca Simley)

12/15 - Kristina Hanson (Saturday pianist)

12/16 8:15 – Cherub Choir

10:45 – Adult Choir

Both – Spirit Ringers

Congregational Christmas Celebration (Christine Carman, Emma Scheel, Becca Simley, Cherub Choir, Chorister Choir)

12/19 – Cantors (Noon- Carla Osberg/ 6:30 – Emma Scheel)

12/23 8:15 – String Trio (Grace, Xander, & Will Neibuhr), Beth Strasheim, Kathy Havlicek-Cook

10:45 – Adult Choir, Alex Hinton, Ann Nitzel

Both – Family Bells (The Niebuhr Family, Kristi & Dakota Fisher, Cora Hoeft, Tracy & Daria Knezevic, Lucas Culbertson,

12/24 3:30 -The Thorpe Family, Zachary Bushard

5:30 - Christine Carman, Brass (Alex Hinton, Jay Sears, Matt Reckmeyer, Luke Anderson, Steve Janssen), Cherub Choir, Chorister Choir

7:30 - Brass, Low Brass (Matt Reckmeyer, Tony & Luke Anderson, Steve Janssen, Bill Rogge, Boyd Bacon), Adult Choir

10:30 Lucas Culbertson, Kathleen, Chris & Becca Simley

12/25 Bonita Johnsen, Erica Johnsen Buss, Erin Pfister

12/30 Gina Seebohm

Special Services - December 5, 12, & 19:

Advent Prayer Services: The setting was changed to Holden Evening Prayer (from Taize/Holden version). Speakers of each week shared their experiences and charged us on the theme "Until All Are Fed." I'm grateful of those who led the services as cantors.

A Service of Remembrance & Blessings of Hope - December 9:

Relatively small group of people gathered for this service. But this service seems to be very meaningful to many - coming together with loss of loved ones or broken hearts.

Faith Trek music:

Becca Simley and Emma Scheel helped most of the fall music. They are magnetic to connect the children with learning music. We will miss Emma while she will be studying in Spain during the spring semester. The Faith Trek children shared the Discipleship Song during the Christmas Celebration.

Worship Preparation:

We are grateful for so many people who quietly prepared worship spaces to look "normal."

Bonita Johnsen set up the trees and the lights, Carol Mason and Bonita took care of all the paraments and banners, a group from East High School vocational training program put the 400 candles together for Christmas Eve. Many people including staff set the poinsettias. Special thanks to Cyndi Crouse who quietly moved all the poinsettias out of the sanctuary and placed the plastic bags back for people to take home.

Respectfully submitted,

Masako Bacon

Sharon Hardel's Report to Council Dec. 12, 2018 – Jan. 8, 2018

Activities This Month:

I participated in regular staff meetings, choir Christmas gathering, and staff Christmas gathering.

During the Christmas break the High School and Middle School learning program did not meet. Many did however participate in our annual Christmas Celebration which was held on Dec. 16. It seemed the program was enjoyed by all. Our learning sessions start up again on Jan. 6. Megahn Schafer and I will facilitate the Middle School lesson and Patrick Hayden-Roy will facilitate the High School lesson.

The Senior High Youth Group met each Sunday except Dec. 30. We continue to plan for our Puerto Rico trip once a month. We held a bake sale on Dec. 16, thanks to all who purchased goodies to help fund our trip. We had a Christmas Party on Dec. 23 where we exchanged white elephant gifts and Christmas socks. Jan. 4 we will provide the lunch for First Friday Jazz and Jan. 6 we will serve a salad bar and dessert at Matt Talbot.

The Middle School Youth Group met Dec. 15. We held a bake sale after the Saturday service to raise funds for our South Dakota trip and then had a Christmas pizza party. We enjoyed some goodies youth brought to share and then a Christmas Carol scavenger hunt. We will meet again on Jan. 6 for a pot luck and prayer station exercises as well as planning for our summer trip.

The Middle School and High School youth were invited to help with the food pantry at St. Andrews on Dec. 26 and Jan. 2. The Niebuhr triplets helped on Jan. 2. We had a lot of food and personal care items to sort and stock. Hopefully more youth will be able to help out and share in the experience as opportunities become available.

The Souper Bowl of Caring Food Challenge kicks off this week with Oatmeal vs. Cereal. The High School and Middle School youth came up with the food pairings for this year's competition. All food and monetary donations will go to the Lincoln Lutheran Food Pantry. When we were there Jan. 2, the shelves were looking pretty bare, especially the cereal section, so please donate and pass the word if you are able. Dakota Fisher helped me set up the display in the commons where you can leave your donations. Thank you.

The Pre-School and Elementary children and parents will meet on Jan. 6. We will learn about the FaithTrek word Epiphany. Children will decorate star cookies and enjoy some games like flashlight tag and follow the star.

I helped with Dinner plus Learning on Dec.19. We combined the groups due to Advent worship. I planned the intro and game time and Pastor Justin took the question and answer time. We learned about the sacrament of Holy Communion.

I had a chance to help with the Back Pack Program Dec. 14. Donice Casper showed me the routine. It is a well -run program, the staff and children were polite and thanked us for being there.

I attended the Advent services and Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services...All were very inspiring and filled with messages of hope. Thanks to everyone who shared their time and talents to make it a special season. Kent and I also enjoyed the Christmas Day lunch. It was wonderful to spend the day with our First family since we did not travel back to PA this year.

Projects Working On:

1. Youth Group gatherings for pre-school – high school youth
2. Middle School Learning lessons with Megahn, Courtney, and Carin
3. Summer accompaniment trips (Sr. High and Middle School)
4. Background checks needed for 2019 (sent out requests Jan. 2 and received one back so far)

In Peace,

Sharon Hardel

Adult Forum Committee

December 11, 2018 – Meeting Notes

Gene Brass, Patrick Hayden-Roy, Jim Kisling, Brian Niebuhr, Sunni Richardson, Karen Statham, Lyle Petersen and Connie Kisling met on December 11, 2018.

Outstanding items and older topics:

- a. More Nadia Bolz-Weber videos for possible backup topics – talk more in 2019.
- b. *Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation Organizations*, suggested by Clay Ehlers. To be continued.
- c. *A view of the challenges of Lutheran churches big and small in the Nebraska diocese* – Assistant to the Bishop, Juliette Hampton (suggested Megan Morrow) – Lyle said he will check with Megan Morrow instead of Juliette Hampton.
- d. *Story Telling – Us Telling and Listening to Others* – Lisa Kramme, on Synod staff – Sunni thought about removing the topic. It was decided to continue with the topic, so Sunni will check with Lisa.
- e. *World Food Prize* (out of Des Moines, in regard to hunger) Keegan Kaukzky – Sunni reported she would check with Keegan to see if he might be in the area in the spring.
- f. “*Gotta Be Me*,” Program in Omaha, Tiffany Clifton – Sunni will communicate more with Tiffany.

Remaining December 2018/January 2019 Schedule

December 16 – *Advent/Christmas All Congregation Celebration* – Activity Center No Adult Forum

December 23 – *A Christmas Topic* – Patrick Hayden-Roy

December 30 – *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* – Movie

January 6, 2019 – The Book, “*The Omaha Language and the Omaha Way*” – Aubrey Streit Krug and Loren Frerichs

January 13 – Annual Meeting Preview in the Activity Center – NO Adult Forum

January 20 – Annual Meeting Preview in the Activity Center – NO Adult Forum

January 27 – *My Year of Internship*, Vicar Jason Davis from the UNL Lutheran Center

2019 Calendar and Scheduling –

- a. *Spiritual Direction* – Gina Seebom, our certified spiritual director through the Nebraska Synod program – Scheduled for February 24th.
- b. *Research at UNL Indicates Hunger Can Also be Profitable* (suggested by Kay Rockwell) – Scheduled for March 3rd.

- c. *Generation: Together* (Judy Batterman) – Scheduled for March 24 and March 31. Brian will be the presenter. These two sessions will include our high school students.
- d. *The History of the Bible* – To include the formation and reception of the text of the Bible. Patrick said April 28 and May 5 works for this two-part presentation.
- e. *Lifelong Learning Plan at FLC* – Sunni said she would get a date from Pastor Justin.

BACKUP Topics:

- 1. “*Cross: Where God Is*,” suggested by Pastor Justin. Utilizes the You Tube Video: Pathways video #5 *The Cross*, Animate Faith, Nadia Bolz Weber (8 minutes and 48 seconds).
- 2. PBS DVD, “*Martin Lutheran – The Idea that Changed the World*.” Patrick presenting.
- 3. Rob Bell DVD’s

Ideas for Presentations/Other Topics/Comments

- 1. Sunni suggested Michelle Michl, who did a TED Women Conference
- 2. Gene suggested “Ratio Christi” at UNL, presenting Christian apology, an argument for defending the Christian faith – made up of grad students.

Megan Morrow made the following suggestions via email to Connie. Megan thought Pastor Mary would be a good presenter for some of these, too.

- 1. Bible study on end-time theologies (note there are more than one) and how they are influencing political decisions there (specifically Christian Zionism and millennialism). Connie will talk with Pastor Dan in this regard.
- 2. A book study on “*The Rapture Exposed*” by Dr. Barbara Rossing (professor at Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago).
- 3. A bible study focused on the “promised land” and what that does or doesn’t mean for contemporary Israel. The Israel of today is not the same as the biblical Israel.
- 4. The question of why the moving of the embassy is problematic or advantageous depends on perspective and the underlying question of why some want Jerusalem to be the capital of the state of Israel, and why for others it is important that it continue to be shared. Some who want to make Jerusalem the capital are motivated by political reasons and others by religious reasons. Similarly, those who want to keep it shared are motivated by both. It’s important to understand the motivations and underlying hopes and fears in order to understand the repercussions and potential outcomes.

Adjourn

Submitted by Connie Kisling

Minutes of the Fellowship Committee

December 11, 2018

Attending: Pat Dewald, LuAnn Snyder, Cindy Schuster, Ann Allen, Phyllis Frickel, Carlene Falos, Judy Bailey, Judy Batterman, Linda Carlson

Devotions: Phyllis Frickel

Review of Events:

1. **Thanksgiving Eve post-worship pie** – Several non-committee members surprised us by bringing pies, so we had an abundance, and were able to use the left-overs at the Thanksgiving Day dinner. We decided that we should continue to prepare gluten-free and sugar-free pies in the future.
2. **Thanksgiving Day Dinner** – In addition to members of our committee, Sonia Hixson and Susan Myren helped with the preparation and serving. Carlene prepared 2 whole turkeys and 1 turkey breast, and there were not many leftovers. 46 people attended. As a note for next year, we used paper plates and real utensils.
3. **Advent Lunch and Supper on December 5** – It went fine, with enough soup and desserts.

Upcoming Events:

1. **Advent lunches and suppers on December 12 and 19** – for lunch, we will use frozen soups left from last week. Desserts prepared for both meals will be enough. We have 75 meal trays downstairs, which we will use for the next two weeks. On December 19, Couples in Christ will prepare beef stroganoff and desserts for both meals. Members of our committee will serve lunch and CC will serve supper.
2. **Christmas Dinner** – So far, only one individual has signed up to come, but we expect many more. Pastor will announce it again at this weekend's worship services. There is also an article in The Voice. We provide the turkey, one ham, potatoes, dressing, and gravy. The committee discussed the time gap between the close of Christmas Day service and the serving of dinner, and would like to ask the staff for the possibility of holding next year's Christmas service at 10:30.
3. **Easter Egg Hunt** – Location may be an issue this year, with construction occurring in our church. Judy Bailey, who is on Council, will report at our next meeting the estimated construction timeline so that we may plan accordingly.

Our next meeting: Tuesday, January 8, 2019, at 5:30 p.m.

Judy Bailey will give the devotions.

Submitted by Linda Carlson, Secretary