

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

January 16, 2024

Council Meeting Minutes

Devotions with Holy Communion were held in the sanctuary, led by Pastor Robin.
The meeting was called to order by Craig McKibben.
Pastor Robin opened with prayer.

Attending: Pastor Robin, Pastor Ken, Mike Schroeder, Craig McKibben, Brent Boston, Jeanne Bock, Ben Forman, Carol Lenox, Brian Bushong, Michael Dahl, Sarah Neal, Doug Niekamp, Josh Billnitzer, Stella DeWitt

Introduction of Guests none

Review of Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Consent Agenda: Brent moved, Michael seconded. Approved.

Approval of Council and Academy Board minutes

Approval of reports (Committee, Task Force, Treasurer, etc.)

Pastor Robin's Report - Highlights

1. Church Staff
 - a. Stella, DYCE, began her full-time role at the beginning of the year. Pastor Ken will be presiding at Saturday night worship services in addition to other part time work. Pastor Jim will continue conducting monthly worship services at our senior living communities and helping with pastoral care.
2. Worship
 - a. Saturday Worship: Continues to have attendance around 20 - 30 people. On December 30, the group honored Pastor Jim for being their worship leader for the past four years.
 - b. Sunday Worship:
 - i. We were blessed with one baptism in October - Kennedy Kay Olmstead.
 - ii. The choir has grown to about 27 singers.
 - c. Wednesday Worship Service - We average 5-12 participants.
 - d. Wednesday Midweek Lenten Services will begin on Wednesday, February 14 with Ash Wednesday service that will include Holy Communion. All evening midweek services will follow the community meal and start at 6:30 pm. The theme for Lent is "Pausing to Pray the Psalms".
 - e. Pastor Ken, Pastor Robin and Stella have been leading worship for the youth at the Juvenile Detention Center. This ministry will soon expand to include the Regional Residential Detention Center.
3. Pastoral Care
 - a. Pastor Robin and Pastor Ken are in conversation with the Deacons and Stephen Ministers to form a Pastoral Care Team that will serve God through providing care and comfort for homebound and those needing God's word and care during difficult times in their lives.
4. Christian Education
 - a. Milestones Ministry - Kindergartners received a blessing and a personalized shell with their names and baptism dates on Sunday January 14.
 - b. Tutoring outreach continues on Wednesday afternoons with students from Crim Elementary. BGSU college students and one of our catechism students are the tutors.
 - c. St. Mark's, Solomon (Woodville) and Grace (Fremont) will bring confirmation students together for a retreat on Presidents' Day weekend, 2024.
 - d. The education committee is working on a scholarship application for the new scholarship fund that has been created at St. Mark's for high school and college students who are actively involved at St. Mark's.

5. Youth & Campus Ministry
 - a. Stella is working with campus peer ministers to plan weekly meetings and service opportunities.
 - b. The ELCA Youth Gathering team is hosting a bowling event at Al Mar Lanes on Sunday, February 4, 2024.
 - c. Youth group met on Sunday January 14 for a service project (blanket making) and ice skating.
6. Wednesday Night Meal
 - a. We continue to average about 80 meals per Wed.
7. Continuing Education/Conference/Community Participation -
 - a. I met with the first call pastors and Bishop Daniel on Thursday, December 14.
 - b. I will be attending the Ohio ELCA Rostered Leaders Gathering at Sawmill Creek on January 23 and 24.
 - c. Human Relations Commission - I participated in the MLK, Jr. event on Friday, January 12 at the Wood County Library. Our Academy students, our Saturday night pianist, Cleve Patten and Sally Bresler provided music and refreshments for the event.
 - d. The 2024 Northwest Ohio Synod Assembly will be held here at St. Mark's on June 1.
8. Fellowship/Service/Outreach
 - a. WAM continues with plans to open an additional office in Northwood at Calvary Lutheran Church.
 - b. The Cocoon Shelter will house its administrative offices at St. Mark's (Room 104) for several months as their offices go through a renovation.
9. Deacon Ministry
 - a. Work continues in the areas of discernment (transition) and future plans to create a pastoral care team.
10. Other
 - a. BGMA (Bowling Green Ministerial Association) - Community Worship Service with combined choirs is being planned for Good Friday services at St. Mark's.

Parish Administrator's Report - Highlights

New Business:

1. December Attendance: December worship attendance was down 6.6% over the 5yr. average.
2. Annual Attendance: With the exception of 2020 (Parking Lot Worship) attendance has held steady since 2015. Annual attendance has only varied a couple hundred people each year over this span.
3. December/2023 Gifts: December contributions were \$60,547 above expenses. [YE \$106,974]
4. Budgeted Gifts/Expenses: Year End contributions through 2023 were \$46,991 under budget (-4.9%) and expenses were \$153,966 less than budgeted (-14.8%).
5. Sanctuary Renovations: The sanctuary renovations are scheduled to begin in June and are expected to last 4-6 weeks. Worship will be held in the Family Life Center during this time.
6. Dishwasher: The kitchen dishwasher broke prior to Christmas and has been out of commission for several weeks. The heat booster assembly was completely corroded and needed replaced. The cost for this repair is approx. \$4,000 (waiting on parts).
7. Memorial Gift: We recently received notice of a death benefit gift left to St. Mark's from the estate of Tom Newby.

Academy Director's Report - Highlights

1. A grant of \$43,000 was applied for and approved. Options are being researched and discussed on how it can be used.

Director of Youth and Christian Education Report - Highlights

1. Still looking for nursery workers.

Music/Communications Report - Highlights

New/Continuing Business:

1. Music in Service
 - a. Lenten Services – Our midweek Lenten services will contain a vocal quartet and flute (similar to our Holden Advent services).
 - i. Focus on Psalms. The vocal quartet will rotate between three anthems throughout the six weeks. We will also keep the service order/hymn selection the same throughout the season. (Other than one focus hymn scattered throughout the service relating to the psalm of the night.)
2. Academy Music
 - a. The Academy is back in the swing of things. The bell set has arrived, and students will be learning new songs/rhythm activities as the weeks go on.
3. Social Media
 - a. Steady social media responses. Things are going well.
4. Other Communications
 - a. The bulletins have been slightly changed around throughout the past few months. More QR codes, silent prayers, lesson previews, flower donations, etc.

Ministry Reports

1. Education (Brian Bushong)
2. Safety (Bob Ashenfelter)
3. Outreach (Doug Neikamp, Sarah Neal & Jeanne Bock)
4. Stewardship (Brian Bushong & James Nester)
 - a. Discussion of cash coverage at end of 2023 – which new ministries might be able to be started
5. Worship (Carol Lenox)
6. Next Gen (Mike Dahl & Ben Forman)

Old Business

New Business

1. Handbook policy revisions – sections 6.1.1, 6.1.4, 7.1 and elimination of Appendix H
 - a. **Michael moved, Ben seconded, approved.**
2. Benevolence recommendation approval
 - a. Benevolence to the synod and larger church has been \$50,000 in prior years. In 2024 it is \$55,000.
 - b. 80% of the \$50,000 will go to local (NW Ohio Synod). There are 161 churches in our synod. 20% of the \$50,000 will go to the greater ELCA. The extra \$5,000 will be used to fund micro-grants to help fund new ministries in small churches.
3. Volunteer(s) to represent St. Mark's as a delegate at the 2024 Synod Assembly on June 1, 2024, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church.
 - a. Michael Dahl volunteered. **Sarah moved, Brent seconded to approve Michael as a member to the Assembly representing St. Marks. Approved.**

Other Business

Adjournment and Prayers Mike moved, Jeanne seconded to adjourn. Closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Upcoming important dates:

Council Meeting February 20, 2024