

## St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church Council Minutes

### March 19, 2020 – Covid-19 Emergency meeting

**Attendees:** Andre Brideau, Wilfred Feener, Belinda Josephson, Ann Joudrey, Marshall Robar, Helen Sarty , Sarah VanderWal, Cedric Wentzell , David Zwicker. **Ad HOC member:** Pastor Paul Jensen

**Regrets:** Judy Garber, Karen Field

Belinda Josephson welcomed all council members and called the meeting to order (social distancing was practiced throughout meeting.) Helen Sarty opened in prayer.

**MOTION 1: ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA:** Moved Ann Joudrey/Second Cedric Wentzell; **MOTION PASSED**

Financial Report was circulated in advance of the meeting, reviewed briefly by Andre.

**MOTION 2: ACCEPTANCE OF FINANCIAL REPORT:** Moved Andre Brideau/Second David Zwicker; **MOTION PASSED**

This month's council meeting focused on preparing a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore election of council officers was deferred to a later date. Past Chair Donald Himmelman will continue as signing officer along with Belinda Josephson, and Andre Brideau until a new signing officer can be elected.

Pastor's Report was circulated in advance of the meeting and reviewed by council members. Pastor Paul noted that he will be significantly limiting visitation due to risks associated with Covid-19 but is actively looking into ways to ensure that contact is maintained with all members of the congregation, especially those most vulnerable and isolated. A letter from Pastor Paul was circulated earlier to all members of the congregation by email. The office will be asked to send a copy of the letter by mail to members who do not use the internet. Pastor Paul reported that the Bishop has provided positive feedback on this letter.

### **NEW BUSINESS – COVID -19 Short-Term and Long-Term Planning**

The world has not faced a pandemic in recent memory. In these unsettling times, the first priority of the council is to keep our congregation members safe. The council is preparing plans for the Immediate Period, Short term ( 1-3 months), Intermediate (3-6 months) and Long Term (6months +). This meeting focused on Immediate and some Short Term planning.

### **BUILDING USE**

**MOTION 3:** *"THAT all church services at Saint Paul's be suspended until such time as the Chief Medical Officer and/or Premier of NS allows social gatherings once again."* Moved-Helen Sarty/Second-Wilfred Feener: **MOTION PASSED**

**ACTION** – Pastor Paul and Sheena will immediately place signs on all doors to the church and the doors will be locked. Sheena will be asked to compile a list of who has keys to the church and those who do not absolutely require access to the church building at this time will be asked to return their keys.

**MOTION 4:** *"THAT for the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak St Paul's church building will be closed to all gatherings and events. An exception will be made for the Community Café which will be asked to move to a take-out model only and to*

limit the number of Café volunteers in the building for meal distribution". Moved-Marshall Robar/Second-Ann Joudrey:

**MOTION PASSED**

**ACTION:** Belinda will communicate with Tammy Crouse regarding the new limitations for the Community Café. All other rental groups such as AA, and TOPS have already suspended their meetings in the church based on recommendations from the Chief Medical Officer.

**STAFFING**

Typically, contributions to the church have been reduced on weeks when there is no service (e.g. Snow storm cancels a service). Currently Congregational Giving is split approximately 75% Envelope: 25% PAR. This raises concerns regarding how the church can continue to run if revenues are suspended along with church services.

A letter from the Treasurer was shared with the congregation via email (and will be mailed to those who have limited internet). This letter outlines the importance of continued giving during these uncertain times and ways to make sure that gifts reach the church including enrolling in PAR, Online donations, Interact E-transfer, Mailing in envelopes and dropping of envelopes at the church. Andre noted that Keith Myra commended him on this letter and shared that it will be used as a template for all churches in the Eastern Synod.

Discussion was held regarding the cost of "running" the church on a monthly basis. While some costs such as paper, toner, committee expenses, electricity and water may be reduced during the time that the church is closed, other costs remain (e.g. heating costs are spread over 12 months instead of just the heating season). Andre noted that prior to this meeting the average cost of "running St. Paul's" averaged \$10,000/month. *Approximately 70% of the church budget goes toward salaries and payroll expenses.*

**Saint Paul's currently has 5 paid staff**

Minister/Sr. Pastor	Pastor Paul	Regular Full-time	Eligible for regular EI benefits
Office Adminsitrator	Sheena Fancy	<i>Regular</i> Part-time (beginning Jan 2020)	May not have # hours for regular EI, Likely eligible for COVID-19 EI benefits
Organist	David Zwicker	Regular Part-time	Eligible for regular EI benefits
C&P Pianist	Doug	Contracted Part-time	? Eligible for COVID-19 EI Benefits
Custodian	Nancy Robar	Contracted Part-time	? Eligible for Covid-19 EI benefits

Much discussion was held regarding the wisdom/fiscal responsibility of maintaining a full staff in these uncertain times. Recognition was given to the fact that the St. Paul's was already in deficit at the time of the 2020 AGM due to weather-related church cancellations. Several council members remarked that they would not "run a household or a business in a deficit" and they were wary of doing the same with the church. Other members asked council to bear in mind that St. Paul's is not a household but God's Church and His hands and feet in Bridgewater. They shared their belief that we have a responsibility as disciples to continue His work in spite of Covid-19. One member shared the experience with Tithing despite financial challenges and the temptation to cut back on donations, noting that remaining faithful in giving had unfailingly resulted in God's continued blessing. The question was raised as to how it would be perceived if St. Paul's shut its door completely including the church office, thereby cutting off a major point of contact and messaging for the congregation and community as a whole. In general it was agreed that, while we are called to be wise stewards, we must act with a *Spirit of Faith* not a *Spirit of Fear*.

Each position was discussed individually. David Zwicker and Marshall Robar excused themselves during discussion of the organist and custodian positions due to potential conflict of interest. Pastor Paul also excused himself during discussion of the Minister position.

The following Motions regarding staffing were the result of the above discussion:

**MOTION 5:** *"THAT the position of OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR be maintained status quo for a period of one month at which time the Council will review the Covid-19 situation and prepare a new motion regarding continuation or suspension of the office administrator position going forward."* Moved-Wilfred Feener/Second-Helen Sarty : **MOTION PASSED**

**ACTION:** Belinda will notify Sheena that her position will continue for a minimum of 1 month. During that time precautions will be taken to limit Sheena's physical exposure to the public. Sheena will remain the primary contact point for the community via telephone and will continue to disseminate information via: email to the congregation. She will be asked to prepare letter mail for those without internet.

**MOTION 6:** *"THAT the position of C&P PIANIST be suspended effective Friday, March 20/2020, until such time as the Chief Medical Officer of NS lifts the ban on social gathering currently in placed due to the COVID-19 pandemic."* Moved Ann Joudrey/Second Cedric Wentzell: **MOTION PASSED**

**ACTION:** Belinda will communicate the outcome of the council meeting to Doug. (Belinda had not spoken with Doug personally *prior* to the council meeting but had heard through others that Doug would be agreeable with suspension of his services due to the COVID-19 crisis)

**MOTION 7:** *"THAT the position of CHURCH ORGANIST/CHOIR DIRECTOR be suspended effective Friday, March 20/2020, until such time as the Chief Medical Officer of NS lifts the ban on social gathering currently in placed due to the COVID-19 pandemic."* Moved Andre Brideau/Second Ann Joudrey: **MOTION PASSED**

**ACTION:** David was informed immediately following the vote of the council decision. Andre will prepare a Record Of Employment (ROE) and assist David with the process of applying for EI.

**MOTION 8:** *"THAT the position of CHURCH CUSTODIAN be suspended effective Friday, March 20/2020, until such time as the Chief Medical Officer of NS lifts the ban on social gathering currently in placed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. NOTE: Church Council reserves the right to reinstate custodial service on a per diem basis should the situation arise where these services are required. (Per Diem rate TBD)."* Moved Sarah VanderWal/Second Wilfred Feener: **MOTION PASSED**

**ACTION:** Marshall was made aware of the Council decision immediately following the vote. It is unclear whether Nancy will be eligible to receive EI benefits under the new COVID-19 EI legislation. Every attempt will be made to facilitate her application for EI benefits should she choose to move forward with this.

In an effort to comply with Insurance requirements Pastor Paul and members of the Property Committee will complete a daily walk through of the church building. Cedric and Pastor Paul will prepare a check-list of items to monitor and Sheena will be asked to prepare a calendar for purposes of recording these checks. The thermostats in the Sanctuary and Hall will be set at a constant temperature as there is no need for additional heat on weekends while the building is closed. The temperature for the Church Office and Pastor's Paul's Office will be maintained at a comfortable level during business hours.

**MOTION 9:** *“THAT the position of **SENIOR PASTOR** be maintained for a period of 3 months at which time the Council will review the COVID-19 situation and any recommendations from the Eastern Synod. At that time the Council will prepare a new motion regarding the continuation or suspension of the minister position going forward.”* Moved Marshall Robar/Second Helen Sarty: **MOTION PASSED**

**ACTION:** Pastor Paul was informed of the council decision immediately following the vote. Pastor Paul noted that he will be meeting by phone with the Bishop on Tuesday, March 24 and will inform council of any pertinent discussions. The council asked Pastor Paul to begin to reach out individually to congregation members by phone to inform them of the current church situation and how St. Paul’s will be proceeding for the immediate future.

Pastor Paul will work with Peter Oickle to disseminate information via the church’s face book page. The weekly scripture readings as well as a devotional prepared by Pastor Paul will be posted on the website and Facebook page. Pastor Paul will prepare a daily prayer for the Facebook page as well.

Melinda Barrier, Lucille Wentzell and Darlene Slauenwhite have already reached out to those in the congregation aged 70+ to ensure that they have means of getting groceries, prescriptions etc. They will continue to work with Pastor Paul and Sheena to assist anyone in the congregation who is having practical difficulties in this time of social distancing.

A number of congregation members have expressed interest in assisting Pastor Paul to establish a new way of “doing church” for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis. Efforts will be made to gain administrative control of the Webpage so that it can be used as a central point for communication.

Information regarding church resources has been shared on Facebook: Rightnow media, Lutheran church services available on air, etc.

Pastor Paul closed in prayer

Next council meeting: April 23/20 @ 6:30pm

(due to further restrictions on size of groups that are permitted to gather, the meeting is unlikely to occur in person)

Respectfully Submitted: Sarah VanderWal (substitute Secretary)