

# Faith Lutheran Church Congregation Meeting Minutes

January 30, 2022

(Meeting held via Zoom video/audio and dial-in calls)

**Voting Members Present: 136**

## **Council Members Present**

Bill Alrich (President), Chris Bettin (Secretary), Tim Hohulin (Treasurer), Sandy Becker (Stewardship), Tammy Daugherty (Communications), Phil Hartweg (Safety), Kelly and Joe Parratore (Faith Formation), Mark Pedersen (Property), Debbie Rohla (Service), Deb Twaddle (Worship), Pastor Shelly Satran, Pastor Joe Yucha

## **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by President Bill Alrich at 1:05 p.m.

## **Opening Prayer**

Pastor Joe Yucha

## **Welcome**

President Alrich thanked everyone for attending the meeting and briefly outlined how the meeting would proceed. Pastor Shelly Satran discussed the reasons why the meeting had been switched from a hybrid in-person/virtual meeting format to a Zoom-only format, including the pandemic, technical challenges, and user familiarity with Zoom which had been utilized for the two most recent congregation meetings. She said the Council will continue to explore options for hybrid meetings. She then walked the meeting participants through several slides on how to participate remotely in the meeting.

## **Approval of Minutes**

**MOTION** (Tammy Daugherty/Sandy Becker): To approve the minutes of the January 24, 2021, Annual Congregation Meeting. (Carried)

## **Approval of Meeting Agenda**

**MOTION** (Tim Hohulin/Joe Parratore): To adopt the meeting agenda as presented.

Before the vote was taken to approve the agenda, President Alrich opened the floor for discussion. Joe Bodzioch was recognized and expressed his concerns about the process used by Council to place agenda item VIII, Welcome Statement & Reconciling in Christ (RIC) designation, on the agenda. He said he did not think the congregation had sufficient opportunities to participate in the decision-making and development of the Welcome Statement and RIC designation and that the initiative had not been adequately communicated to the congregation. He then indicated that he wanted to make a motion to amend the agenda by A) removing item VIII so it could be given

further consideration by the congregation, and B) splitting discussion on the Welcome Statement and RIC designation into separate items.

As a point of order, Secretary Chris Bettin recommended that Joe B. consider dividing his single motion to amend into two separate motions to amend. The first motion to amend would call for the removal of item VIII from the agenda so it could be given further consideration by the congregation. The second motion, to be made only if the first motion failed, would be to split discussion on the Welcome Statement and RIC designation into separate items. Joe B. agreed to divide his initial motion into two separate motions.

**MOTION** (Joe Bodzioch/Ted Palmreuter): To amend the agenda by removing item VIII, Welcome Statement & Reconciling in Christ designation, for additional consideration and input by the congregation. (Failed by a vote of 21 in favor and 100 opposed)

Following are highlights from the discussion which took place prior to the vote on the motion to amend the agenda by removing item VIII:

- Pastor Shelly provided background on why the Council felt there was a need to develop a new Welcome Statement and consider becoming an RIC congregation, including:
  - The existing statement had become outdated,
  - A growing number of church members had expressed interest in having a more inclusive statement, and
  - The Search Committee for a new director of music indicated that they had been asked by many candidates “Is your church welcoming?”

She also briefly outlined the process Council used for involving the congregation in the discussion and development of the draft statement and consideration of becoming an RIC congregation, including numerous announcements in *The Dove* and at the beginning of worship services, five well-attended Adult Forum sessions (totaling 100+ participants), inclusion on Council meeting agendas for discussion during open Council meetings beginning in August 2021, summaries of Council discussions in meeting minutes, and direct mailing of the draft statement to the membership.

- Council members Tammy Daugherty and Kelly Parratore said they attended a couple of the Adult Forum discussions and were impressed by the turnout.
- FLY student Elijah Swanstrom reported that there were “a lot of youth participants” at the Adult Forum sessions.
- Deb Hornell noted that the ongoing pandemic didn’t appear to be a detriment to attendance at the forums.
- Jane Schwartz asked if there had been any calls to the church office from people who were unable to attend Adult Forum, and Pastor Joe responded that no church members had called the office for that reason.

- Joe B. expressed concern that a special congregation meeting hadn't been called to discuss the Welcome Statement and RIC designation, pointing out other special congregation meetings that had taken place to discuss the parking lot and life safety projects.
- Michele Bodzioch pointed out that Adult Forum is typically an education hour, not a time to discuss policy; Pastor Joe responded that policy, budget, and other matters have been discussed during Adult Forum from time to time.

Joe B. then introduced his second motion.

**MOTION** (Joe Bodzioch/Tom Wendorf): To split the discussion on the Welcome Statement and RIC designation into separate agenda items. (Failed by a vote of 57 in favor and 70 opposed)

Following are highlights from the discussion which took place prior to the vote on the motion to amend the agenda by splitting the discussion on the Welcome Statement and RIC designation into separate agenda items:

- A question was raised whether separate meetings were needed to decide on the Welcome Statement and the RIC designation, to which former Council President Deb Hornell responded that separate meetings were not required.
- Carl Henninger asked if during the discussion on agenda item VIII a vote could be taken to postpone consideration of the Welcome Statement or RIC designation to a later date. Secretary Bettin responded that would be possible.

With both motions to amend having failed by vote, the congregation then voted on the initial motion by Tim Hohulin and seconded by Joe Parratore to adopt the meeting agenda as presented. This motion to adopt was carried by a wide margin with no official count needed.

## **Reflections and Reports—2021 Review and 2022 Preview**

### ***Report of the President***

President Alrich delivered the report of the president, stating that 2021 was “a very eventful year...that tested our resilience and commitment, and opened our eyes to many new possibilities.” He listed numerous highlights from 2021, including the following:

- Construction began on the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry at 55 N. Park.
- The Life Safety project lead by Council members Phil Hartweg (Safety) and Mark Pedersen (Property) was completed.
- The roof was replaced on the church building, thanks to Mark's efforts.
- After considerable research by Jim Hall and Office Administrator Eric Enskat, Faith switched insurance providers from Church Mutual to GuideOne Insurance and wound up with a better policy at about the same cost.
- Faith bid farewell and a happy retirement to long-time Director of Music Todd Carrico; he was replaced by Dr. Zach Zwahlen who joined Faith in early January. Special thanks to Phil

Spencer, Tom Pfaff, Kathy Zima, Sue Warner and many others who shared their musical talents with the congregation during the time between directors.

- The pastors and staff brought energy and creativity to their efforts to maintain and grow Faith's membership and connections despite the pandemic.
- During the year services were held via livestreaming, in-person outside on the front lawn, and finally once again back in Faith's beautiful sanctuary. Virtual services will be a permanent addition to Faith's worship options, thanks to the hard work of Tammy and Rich Daugherty, Tom Pfaff, Andrew Sells, Jay Swanstrom, and Jim and Debbie O'Connor.

President Alrich concluded by saying it is an honor to serve as Council President and work with the talented people who comprise the church Council.

### ***Report of the Senior Pastor***

Pastor Shelly spoke of many positive occurrences at Faith during 2021, including the following:

- The beginning of the "next chapter in Faith's music ministry" began with the retirement of Todd Carrico and hiring of Zach Zwahlen.
- The return to in-person activities such as Adult Bible Study, Adult Forum, and children's education.
- Being graced with having seminary students learning at Faith, including Vicky Carathanassis (LTSC Ministry in Context student) and Faith's Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry Kayla Feil (Luther Seminary Christian Public Leadership student).
- The gratitude of Faith's members and staff, and all those who use the church building, for its continued care and maintenance.
- Generosity shared through endowment grants, benevolence gifts, and Faith's ministry spotlight to local organizations such as the Glen Ellyn Food Pantry and PADS as well as Synod ministries, not to mention the donations of "time, skills, effort, energy, creativity, leadership, labor and love" by members of Faith.
- The process of creating a Welcome Statement for Faith Church and becoming an RIC congregation.

In conclusion, Pastor Shelly gave "thanks for the family of God that is Faith Church, for the witness of the saints who departed from us this past year, for the new siblings among us, and for the unique gifts of each person that make us your body ever striving to do your will and care for your world. Guide us and lead us in your grace in the year ahead."

### **Finance Report (2021) and Proposed Budget (2022)**

Treasurer Tim Hohulin presented the 2021 year-end financials and a proposed break-even budget for 2022. (Detailed information can be found in the Faith Church 2021 Annual Report.)

Tim referenced his budget presentation which took place via Zoom on January 23, 2022, and thanked Pastor Shelly for her support throughout the year and former Treasurer Jim Hall who "was always available to answer questions at a moment's notice."

According to Tim, the church budget ended 2021 with a \$66,000 surplus driven in large part by strong revenue in December, primarily in the areas of regular envelope and special envelope giving, plus overall lower expenses due primarily to the retirement of Todd Carrico and the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on certain expenses. Tim noted that several major repairs and upgrades to the church building were completed in 2021, including the life safety project and replacing the roof.

In addition, Tim presented a slide outlining plans for how the \$66,000 surplus will be used in 2022.

Tina Rudins asked if money had been earmarked to upgrade the equipment in the Luther Hall kitchen. Tim responded that it had not, but invited Tina to send her request to him, Membership Secretary/Accountant Sally Stauber, and the pastors for the Council's review and consideration.

**MOTION** (Kathy Dibadj/Don Hallberg): To approve the 2022 budget as presented. (Voting to take place via electronic and paper ballot following the meeting.)

### **New Business**

#### ***Welcome Statement & Reconciling in Christ Designation***

Pastor Shelly and Pastor Joe introduced the topic of the Welcome Statement and Reconciling in Christ designation. Pastor Shelly said that it is commonplace today for people considering a church to check out the church's website for information and in particular a Welcome Statement. They want to know "Will I be received or rejected? Is this a church that's safe for me if I walk through the doors?" She said she believes that by having a Welcome Statement, Faith is "putting into words and actions what I already see happening in our congregation."

Pastor Joe talked about the ReconcilingWorks organization and specifically the Reconciling in Christ (RIC) designation offered by the RW. RW is a Lutheran entity that is not specifically a part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), but is endorsed by the ELCA to help churches move in the direction of being a safe and welcoming community for all. He read out loud the draft Welcome Statement that had been "created during a series of five Adult Forums and approved by the Council." The progress of the Welcome Statement and RIC designation, as well as opportunities for the congregation to participate in the process, had been communicated numerous times via the mechanisms outlined earlier by Pastor Shelly.

Pastor Joe said there are four requirements to become an RIC congregation which are outlined on the RW website at <https://www.reconcilingworks.org/>. A church's Welcome Statement must include specific mention of sexual orientation, gender, and race to be considered for the RIC designation. The donation required by RW is vague, but according to Pastor Joe Faith would likely donate between \$500-\$1,000 per year from the church's \$15,000 discretionary benevolence budget.

Adopting the Welcome Statement and becoming an RIC congregation would be just the first step, however. According to Pastor Joe, following that would be the creation of a team of members from the congregation that would be responsible for determining how Faith “lives out” its welcome statement and holds itself accountable. In addition, the team would closely monitor the activities of the RW and any changes to the RIC designation.

It is intended that Faith’s Welcome Statement be fluid, rather than static, and that it be reviewed regularly.

Pastor Joe noted that a question he and Pastor Shelly have been asked about the statement is “Why do we name some people, but not all?” He said they respond by explaining that “Jesus spoke to those who needed it most—to proclaim welcome to them, we need to identify them.”

**MOTION** (Beth Nyland/Tricia Swanstrom): To approve Faith’s Welcome Statement and application for the Reconciling in Christ designation as presented. (Voting to take place via electronic and paper ballot following the meeting.)

Following are highlights from the discussion on the motion to approve Faith’s Welcome Statement and application for the Reconciling in Christ designation:

- Ted Palmreuter expressed concern that the statement as written is too restrictive; that if “you’re going to name some, then name all.”
- Kathy Dibadj asked, “Who’s not being named? We all need to be heard—all opinions need to be valued. We want to hear from everyone.” As a school nurse, Kathy said that she has had a lot of experience with young people who are part of the LGBTQ community and she knows first-hand that if they are not respected and loved they do not do well. “It is important that everyone is treated equal and feels cared for,” she said.
- Tom Wendorf spoke as a man of faith who also happens to be a trained biologist. He said, “Human sexuality is a spectrum, and religion and science have been butting heads on this forever.” He talked about members of his family who are part of the LGBTQ community and live under the “umbrella of God’s love.”
- Doris Bettin thanked the pastors for “moving us in this direction” and spoke openly about her daughter, Connie, who is a lesbian. Connie and her partner are married and live in Madison, Wisconsin. Doris talked about the many experiences she and her husband, Bill, have had with Connie’s wide network of friends in the LGBTQ community, and noted the important work Connie does helping others as a social worker.
- Jane Stroh said she used to think “Why is simply saying ‘All are welcome’ not good enough?” Then she came to realize the importance of identifying who “all” represents. She said she supports putting a statement on the Faith website “just the way we are doing.”

- Deb Hornell commented that “Ours is not to judge or include—this was pounded into me as a kid. Faith is a welcoming church, and I love this Welcome Statement. I love that it specifically identifies the disenfranchised.”
- Tricia Swanstrom spoke about how honored she was to sing at a trans day of remembrance service. “I learned so much from that experience,” she said. “This Welcome Statement is so important.”
- Kim Harrod referenced her own child as she spoke emotionally about how “young people need this language of support.”
- Bob Sitze, who is retired from the ELCA, said that RW is considered an Independent Lutheran Congregation (ILC) and listed as such by the ELCA. He said there are 26 ILCs identified by the ELCA, all trying to make a difference in the world. He briefly read from the RW website about the RIC and what they are preaching, dispelling concerns that it has no connection to Christ’s teachings. “I was at all the Adult Forum meetings,” Bob said. “They were marvelous experiences—‘Holy Spirit’ stuff—even the group edits.” He gave everyone a chuckle by adding that “The strongest urge in life is not to eat, but to edit.”
- Amy Hohulin recognized all the FLY students who attended the meeting and thanked them for being there and being open-minded.
- FLY student Samantha Lullo said that many have historically had a negative perspective of church because of its thinking on the LGBTQ community, but this Welcome Statement helps defeat that thinking and feeling.
- Tom Pfaff said the process used to create the statement and the statement itself are “moving us as a congregation from being tolerant to having a deeper relationship with the LGBTQ community.” Tom asked the FLY students what they thought. Speaking for the group that was gathered in the youth room upstairs at the church, Elijah Swanstrom responded, “It is important to recognize these groups. We like this statement.”
- Beth Nyland spoke of her appreciation for the congregation accepting her second husband and their blended family when they returned to Faith, noting that in time two of their six children have “identified differently.” She said she is grateful that the congregation is having this conversation and that it’s important for the Welcome Statement to be “spoken and explicit,” adding that, “This is our plaque.”
- Tina Rudins commented that four years ago when she was on the Search Committee for a new pastor, the committee was asked by many candidates, “Are you a welcoming congregation?” She said that beyond the emotional, the Welcome Statement and RIC designation are practical. “They will draw good people to Faith.”

- Gayle Nelson expressed that “We are blessed that we are welcoming everyone into our congregation. Think ‘What would Jesus do?’ He probably would not take a vote on this.”
- Sandy Becker pointed out that she really likes the phrase in the statement that welcomes “believers, questioners, and questioning believers.”
- Ted asked, “Why the rush? What’s so urgent that this needs to be rammed down our throats.” He said he felt strongly that the statement does not include enough groups, such as “people with mental illness, people with criminal backgrounds. We need to look into RIC before we donate to this group.” He also asked whether having an RIC designation means we support allowing athletes to compete according to how they identify, even if it puts them at a physical advantage.
- Pastor Joe and Pastor Shelly responded to Ted’s questions, reiterating that the process of developing the statement and considering becoming an RIC congregation had been under way for a while. It was well-communicated to the membership and many members participated in the process.
- Gayle and Gary Nelson added “this is not urgency, its opportunity.”
- Carl Henninger asked whether the team that will be formed needs to be specified in the motion. Secretary Bettin responded that it was not necessary and assured Carl that his question would be captured in the minutes.
- Council member Tammy Daugherty (Communications) said that if approved she hoped the Welcome Statement would be posted ASAP “so people know that we mean what we say.”

### **Elections**

Pastor Joe described the voting process and said that everyone who wished to vote on the 2022 budget, the Welcome Statement/RIC designation, and the 2022 ballot of candidates needed to provide their name for their vote to count. If more than one church member in a household wished to vote, each member per household needed to complete their own ballot and submit their vote separately. All votes would remain confidential. The results of the voting would be shared with the membership via email shortly after the voting period closed.

**MOTION** (Carl Henninger/Tom Wendorf): To approve the slate of candidates for the vote of the congregation. (Voting to take place via electronic and paper ballot following the meeting.)

### **Recognition of Retiring Council Members**

President Alrich and Pastor Shelly thanked Chris Bettin and Phil Hartweg for their tireless contributions and leadership on Council—Chris since 2018 and Phil since 2019.

### **Closing Prayer**



Pastor Shelly

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by President Alrich at 3:25 p.m.

### **Voting Results**

The voting results concerning the adoption of the 2021 budget, approval of the Welcome Statement/RIC designation, and election of candidates are as follows:

Meeting attendance: 136

Total ballots cast: 136

Results:

- Adoption of 2021 Budget: 135 yes, 0 no, 1 abstain
- Adoption of Welcome Statement/RIC designation: 124 yes, 8 no, 4 abstain
- Gary Nelson, Congregation Council Secretary (first term): 133/133 votes
- Mark Pedersen, Congregation Council Property Chair (second term): 135/135 votes
- Sandy Becker, Congregation Council Stewardship Chair (second term): 135/135 votes
- Debbie Rohla, Congregation Council Service Chair (second term): 136/136 votes
- Retta Hennessey, Congregation Council Preschool Liaison (first term): 136/136 votes
- Wally Becky, Endowment Committee (second term): 135/135 votes
- Synod Delegates: Denise Cmiel, 136/136 votes; Chris Sitze, 135/136 votes; Bob Sitze, 135/136 votes
- Nominating Committee: Jane Stroh (second term), 136/136 votes; Jeff Ulm (first term), 134/136 votes
- Rainbow Place Board: Jennifer Diab (first term), 136/136 votes; Tom Harty (second term), 134/136 votes; Judi Jenz (second term), 135/136 votes; Tina Rudins (first term), 135/136 votes

**Respectfully submitted by:**

Chris Bettin, 2021 Secretary