



12/16/2025 – COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

7:04 p.m. Meeting called to order by Mikel Jones, President

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mikel Jones, Sherri Eriksrud, Bill Tyler, Ashley Pederson, Eric Larson (via phone until 8:00), Kate Peterson, Bill Tyler, Pastor Laura Laughlin, Deb Mangen

MEMBERS ABSENT: Pastor Reggie, Bob Chinnock, Kristi Kirsch

7:06 p.m. Devotional: Kate Peterson

7:13 p.m. Approval of November Council Minutes

- Eric made the motion to approve the minutes, and Kate Peterson seconded the motion.
- All in attendance at the November meeting approved. No one objected.
- Deb Mangen wasn't here for the November meeting and abstained.

Mikel asked to have status updates on committees and Old Business via email to the group to keep the meeting on time.

7:15 p.m. Pastor Reports

Pastor Laura

- Pastor Laura, Ginger Larson, and Matt Scherer met with a sound system consultant. He identified set-up items that can improve the sound system performance. Ginger will train the AV team. The consultant suggested upgrading to digital and made a recommendation of a company that specializes in church sound systems. Laura has asked Matt to work with them to get a quote for the desired upgrade. He said that our speakers are great and we should not accept an upgrade from the company providing the bid. Laura feels comfortable with the sound system performance for the Cantata. The live stream is still unpredictable.
- Pastor Laura met with a new family who has a child who hasn't been baptized and is too shy to have a public baptism. Laura found a way to include others including his family and fellow COG kids his age.
- Lots of music and rehearsal work going into the Cantata weekend.
 - The dress rehearsal is on Saturday.
 - The music ministry staff will be doing a piece together this year.
 - Ginger and Laura have been attending the Brass Rehearsals.
- Christmas Eve worship music is lining up well.
- This last Sunday was the first Sunday in a long time that we have done the children's program during the service. There were 144 people in worship during a below zero Sunday. There have been multiple suggestions and ideas for next year.
- Ginger and Laura have paused the music library updating work for now. They are halfway through the alphabet.

- Garage Band has been on hiatus. Rachel Berg Scherer has stepped forward to lead so that this group of kids who are interested can participate in the Cantata.
- Thank you to Steve and Jane Clay for their prep on alter guild, especially candle prep.
- The Worship Arts team has done a lot of work building the tree in the sanctuary. The tree will be lit up for the Cantata to reinforce the Theme of the Circle of Light. After Sunday, they will meet to do the other prep for Christmas.
- Laura closed out her preaching fellowship the first week in December in Duluth.

*Kate added a “thank you” for all the music ministry prep and rehearsals.

Pastor Reggie (Highlights of Pastor Reggie’s report were read by Mikel Jones)

- Christmas Narrative-lots of joy and good comments.
- Confirmation and Connect had their Gift shopping trip at Target and purchased \$1100 worth of gifts to donate.
- The Senior High engaged in a gingerbread making event on December 3.
- Lefse making and bake sale is this weekend. Kate shared that donated baked goods to be sold can still be brought in on Sunday morning.
- Nine men attended Good News, Good Brews at Green Lake Bible Camp.
- Sara has been working on Stewardship thank you letters.
- No Sunday sermon or communion this Sunday with the Cantata.
- The Welcome Team continues to staff the name tag table. There is discussion about whether to do the nametag table for the Christmas Eve services with the large number of visitors.
 - Laura would prefer that we do not do it because the turnaround between services is quick and there is a bottleneck. There is expected to be a higher turnout with no competing Vikings Game.
 - Mikel is neutral on the subject.
 - Bill thinks it has become a habit and people may look for it if it is not there.
 - Eric suggested we have it, unmanned and further away from the door.
 - Laura added that the table could be in the Sun Hall entrance.
- Kristi and Bob are working on the directory.
 - If you want to order one, the recommendation is a \$10 payment.
 - They staffed a table on Sunday and there were several errors discovered.
 - It can also be accessed online and printed for yourself or via the Icon app.
- The Homeland Security report will come in January.
- Reggie and Ashley are working on the first draft of the budget.
- Stewardship update: Received 82 commitments, 106 total in 2025. \$75,000 behind the total last year. Reggie is sending out reminder emails.
- If there are questions for Reggie, reach out and include the Council or do it directly.

7:40 p.m. Financial Updates: Ashley Pederson

Contributions

- November giving is ahead of budget by \$5,000.
- We are \$11,500 ahead of the contribution budget overall Year-to-date.

- \$499,000 this year compared to \$472,000 last year.
- \$560,000 is our budget goal for the year.
- Grant reports that pledger gifts slowed in November. He is working on 2026 projections.

Rent

- Everything is current except the Driving School. We are missing their rent from November and December. (\$700 total for the 2 months).

Misc.

COVID Employee Retention Credit

- We will be getting \$6800 in the next two months.
 - Reggie and Mikel offered to write a letter asking for a refund of some of the advance payment. We don't expect that we will get it.
 - The \$6800 wasn't in the budget so it is above the budgeted plan.
 - Deb reinforced that at letter is in line.

Youth Trip

- Reggie has designated his continuing education funding to offset some of the remaining Youth Trip expenses not yet paid.
- Emails will be sent to the participants for the remaining amount due.

General Information

- Payroll loss is moved to a different line in the reporting.
- A stock gift has come in, and another is expected.
- Shannon from the Boy Scout troop and Ashley met to transfer titles. Titles are for the trailers in our parking lot. (Not all the trailers are on our property, some are elsewhere).
- The Faithful Knotters quilt sale raised \$1300 for the sign fund. Ashley has created a designated fund.
- MN Paid Leave. All employees have been notified. Ashley encouraged watching the ELCA webinar.
 - The ADP HR trial subscription hasn't been helpful in answering questions on the MN Paid Leave. Sherri suggested not renewing after the test.
 - Sherri called the state to get clarification on Pastor eligibility for MN Paid Family leave and learned that it is related to FICA vs. SECA. Since the Pastors pay SECA, they are not eligible but could choose to participate on their own.
 - Sherri and Ashley will set up time with the Pastors to go over details for them.
- The November Swag donation is \$140. It will be added to the Fall Social fundraising total.
- Lori Robinson's cash flow report anticipates that we will come in strong.
- Each month, there is one Sunday that has a low offering-it seems to be a pattern.

Budget Planning for 2026

- Reggie is working on the 2026 budget.
- Ashley recommends that we increase the administrative and building expense budgets.
- Bob requested to see the building budget in advance. We need to build in a contingency. We have had unplanned facilities expenses. An example is the drain trap with an expected bill of \$400. We are currently over budget by \$3400 in our facilities budget.

7:55 p.m. 10 Year Lease: Ashley Pederson

- Deb from Preschool Place has a 10-year contract that comes due at the end of January 2026.
- Deb (owner) has had health issues, and we are looking to know the Succession Plan.
 - Reggie will talk to Deb about a business plan. The likely plan is for her to sell it to her daughter and daughter-in-law.
- For consideration in the new lease:
 - Language about use and intention/first right of refusal for the basement.
 - Action if the business sells.
 - Current market rental rates.
 - Suggested 5-Year Renewal lease (Kate).
 - Write in a longer notice for vacating the lease (Sherri). It is currently 30 days, and the suggestion is a 6-month notice going forward.
- Current income is \$7500/month.
- If not renewed by Jan 31, the contract will be renewed for one year with the same terms.
 - Is that document regarding the basement separate from the current lease or is it written in the lease? (Kate)
 - The legal counsel for the last lease (Bob Lindall) is retired. We need to find legal counsel to look at this lease. We could get a recommendation from Bob on a new legal representative to start a relationship with.

8:08 p.m. Budget: Ashley Pederson

Ashley has plugged in all requested budget items including new positions, raises, and contracted employees using the following assumptions:

- \$20,000 increase in contributions
- Adjusting the fundraising income from \$37,000 to \$20,000.

This yields a budget shortage of \$50,000.

Expense changes in the first draft include:

- Staff wage increases
- Building coordinator
- Senior High Youth Director
- General and Admin increased cost of \$8,000
- Facilities increase \$4,000
 - 4% increase in utilities, City of Chaska estimate 3.6%
- Increased Preschool Rent 4%
- Maintenance and Repair
- Included benevolence

*Cleaning Service was kept the same.

Discussion:

Sherri-We need job descriptions for the proposed new positions including duties they will handle that will come off an existing job description.

Sara is logging her extra time to help determine duties that need to be covered.

Eric-Is there a unicorn employee who could do slides and janitorial?

Mikel-Reggie was using the concept of a volunteer to outsource slides. He will talk to Grant Taylor about the potential of doing this in the future.

Sherri-A volunteer has risk for availability when on vacation or unavailable.

Mikel/Laura-Staff would have to step in for those occasions

The Janitorial staff continues to be an issue. The current contract is for work completed, not by hours. If the team is efficient, we pay the same amount vs. getting some additional work completed or better quality. The current monthly cost is \$1,250. This covers twice/week cleaning.

Ashley-Leading up to Annual meeting on 2/8/26, we will tighten the budget to resolve the \$50,000 gap between expenses and revenue in the current draft.

Kate-We have heard from the pastors how much it has taken for them to be able to get the workload completed this year. If we do hit budget as expected, is it sustainable?

Bill-We haven't received the security audit yet. Once we do, there will likely be some items we think should be done that will have expense attached to it. How is that accounted for in the budget?

Ashley-We do have a building fund (unrestricted) to use. It is called the Capital fund but does not have a requirement to be used for capital expenditures.

8:26 p.m. Council Resignation: Mikel Jones

Pastor Reggie spoke to Chad LaGow, who recently resigned from the Church Council and will be leaving the congregation. He and his family will leave COG after the programming year, and his son will be confirmed in the fall. Mikel shared Chad's feedback in Pastor Reggie's absence. (Chad gave Pastor Reggie permission to share). He was struggling throughout the year with issues coming up at Council about us as a church becoming too political. Mikel shared that he would like to have seen some dialogue from Chad on his perspective and feelings along the way. As a council, we need to be able to trust each other and be willing to share. We don't need to agree but need to come to a common understanding that can only be done through dialogue. There was discussion on the difficulty of doing that when feeling like the only person in the group representing a point of view and that we need to have courage to speak up. As President, Mikel will allow members of the committees and council to speak at the council meetings. It feels important to let all information/requests be heard and then there can be discussion.

8:38 AED Proposal: Mikel Jones

- Mikel proposed that we move on this purchase so that we have the equipment before the Christmas Eve services. Mikel had conversations with the person we will buy the AED from.
 - The unit can be used on adults and children.
 - It is bilingual.
 - It comes with an 8-year Warranty.
 - If we turn in our current model, we can get a trade-in rebate.
 - There are free CPR classes within a year of purchase.

- We can get the AED unit by the Christmas Eve service.
- The grant program Reggie has applied for is a link for a specific website is not a grant but a reduced price.
- Funding:
 - The highest bid is just under \$2,700. We had previously been told that \$1600 was possible but it is not realistic.
 - We have a \$1,000 gift, leaving the need to use \$1700 from the Building/Capital fund to make the purchase.

A Proposal for a motion was made by Mikel Jones: I propose we vote to approve up to \$2700 for the purchase of an AED device. \$1,000 will come from a gift and we will use up to \$1700 from the Building/Capital fund to make the purchase.

*The original motion was for \$2700 but Eric Larson suggested we raise the requested funding to \$2800 to cover any unexpected increase in expense without needing another Council vote.

\$2800 total, \$1,000 gift. Up to \$1800 from the Building Improvement Fund/Capital Approve.

Motions:

Deb Mangen made the motion as referenced above.

Sherri Eriksrud seconded the motion.

There was no discussion.

Vote: All present voted in favor of the motion.

Proposal Template: Mikel Jones

- Mikel proposes not waiting for a Council meeting to talk through everything. The proposal format used for the AED request supports members working actively on a proposal and sending it out in advance for review to save time during meetings.
- We could use the template to go through other potential purchases like the sound system and new locks on doors.
 - Deb commented that there is also the benefit of documentation. The proposal can be attached to the agenda/minutes to help record how a decision came about. The template also prompts the author to think through steps and questions to answer in advance.

8:51 ELCA Rental Strategy Document: Mikel Jones

- Mikel proposed that a team go through the rental document together. Pastor Reggie would need to be involved.
- The form walks through questions on how space contributes to financial goals, how rates are determined, direct and indirect facility costs, including utilities, cleaning, and paper products.
 - Deb commented that this should also include risk management.
- Mikel is willing to help lead or co-lead and is looking for a team.
- Proposed team members are: Pastor Reggie, Bill Tyler (volunteered), Eric Larson (volunteered), Bob Chinnock (suggested), Lori Robinson (suggested).

9:00 p.m. Closing

Next Meeting: A Doodle Poll will be sent out to determine the date of the next meeting.

Devotion for the January meeting: Bill Tyler

Closing Prayer: Pastor Laura

Motions:

- Eric moved to close the meeting.
- Laura seconded the motion.
- All members present approved the motion.

Submitted by Sherri Eriksrud 1/6/2026