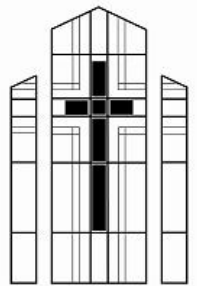




**FARMINGTON LUTHERAN CHURCH
CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
March 10, 2009**



Present: Senior Pastor Jeff Dorman; Council Members Scott Neurauter (President), Matt Piller (Vice President), Craig Beissel, Chris Birch, Rick Fencl, Gary Johnson, Sara Otterness and Alison Wenck; Treasurer Sandy Christensen. Absent: Phyllis Blees, Vicky Cole, Tim Grundler and Diane Randall.

CALL TO ORDER

President Neurauter called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Neurauter added two items to the agenda. They were the Confirmation Evening of Sharing and the Sunshine Fund. Wenck made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Johnson. Motion carried.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Neurauter introduced FLC member Jared Sachs as a guest, saying that Sachs had some thoughts he would like to share. Sachs was accompanied by his wife, Christine. He introduced another guest, Glen Anderson, an FLC member and local banker.

Sachs provided a handout to Council members. He said he had been exploring an idea that had come to him after the annual congregational meeting and Neurauter's recent presentation at worship services. He explained that he had done research on the Internet and found a document on how to issue church bonds. He also had contacted Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and talked with St. Paul Area Synod offices.

He said he was proposing the issuance of church bonds to pay off the mortgage. People would allow FLC to use their money in exchange for a small return. He said that some people have small savings set aside that they could possibly invest but not give to the church. He proposed that FLC issue church bonds for five-, 10-, 20- and 30-year periods. Interest payments would begin after a three-year time period when he thought the church's finances and the economy would be improved. Longtime members had told him that FLC used bonds to finance construction of the former building's education wing and the expansion of the sanctuary.

Anderson said he had talked with two firms that specialize in underwriting such bonds and both were interested. He also planned to speak with another firm the following day and had talked with an attorney who specializes in this type of investment.

Beissel asked Anderson to explain the process in simple terms. Basically, Anderson said someone who invested \$500 with the church would receive interest in three years. The invested funds would go into a trust account with the Council determining how to disperse the account, such as paying the mortgage. The underwriter would make sure the church was qualified to issue bonds and had the ability to pay them back. A holding company would issue the bonds, and a sinking fund would be maintained to pay back investors in the event that FLC "went under," Anderson said. The advantage of selling

bonds would be to give FLC time for the economy to turn around and for the new giving program to take hold for a long-term solution. The next step, according to Sachs and Anderson, would be to gather more information.

Johnson made a motion to authorize Sachs to proceed with further investigation of this option. Wenck made the second. Following discussion, the motion carried. Sachs was asked to keep the Council informed. Council members thanked Sachs and Anderson for their concern and efforts.

Neurauter announced that Beissel was extremely busy so Mark Pearson and Bob Brownawell, members of the Stewardship Ministry Team, would attend Council meetings when Beissel could not do so.

Neurauter said that someone had proposed a \$20,000 matching grant to assist with fund raising. He said the Development Task Force would handle this proposal.

COMMUNION SIGNUP

Neurauter circulated a signup sheet for communion servers.

APPROVALS

Secretary's Report – Otterness made a motion to approve the minutes for the February 10th Council meeting. Birch made the second. Motion carried. Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes for the February 24th Special Council meeting. Fencil made the second. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report – Christensen provided the Treasurer's Report as a handout and discussed the various reports contained within it. The cash balance on Feb. 28 was \$69,407.71, which compared to \$91,788.41 at the start of the year. At the end of January the balance had been \$72,000, so the balance has been dropping. She pointed out that much of the cash balance is tied up in dedicated funds, so FLC has been borrowing from those funds to pay its obligations.

The Statement of Activities showed that revenues totaled \$51,951.21 versus expenses of \$58,692.44 for a net decrease of \$6,741.23. She said these totals were very close to previous projections. Although giving in February was better than in January, the year to date deficit is approximately \$26,000. The weekly average for giving has been around \$12,000.

Another report showed the dedicated funds that are inaccessible, including camp and confirmation payments, youth monies paid toward trips, Global Missions funds given for specific purposes and Endowment Fund interest.

She said the \$16,500 deposit following the first weekend in March was encouraging. However, most of the increase was attributable to two individuals who gave gifts of \$1,000 and \$2,000, 31 gifts of \$100 or more and the Ash Wednesday offering of \$1,800. Deposits for the second weekend in March were nearer to the usual \$12,000. She said Simply Giving receipts for March had not yet been received.

Johnson made a motion to approve the Treasurer's report, seconded by Birch. Motion carried.

REPORTS

Senior Pastor --Pastor Jeff reviewed his report with the Council. He talked about how God is blessing this congregation in the midst of a worldwide financial crisis. He pointed out that FLC has not had two full-time pastors at any time since Pastor Jim retired two years ago. To date, the congregation is short approximately 2,000 hours of pastoral ministry. Understandable insecurity has resulted, he said, explaining the feeling by some members that "things are not the same."

The report said that Pastor Joel had discovered and pointed out several things. Pastor Joel had said that for a congregation of this size and age, FLC was missing some needed internal structures, a number of ministries were underdeveloped, too many attached to the congregation were not yet committed to Christ or the Church, and too many were not yet committed to financing the ministry. Pastor Jeff's report said this created a mountain of work for Pastor Jeff to attempt to climb. In addition, he spent two months alone and then was joined by a 30-hour interim pastor. He is still climbing valiantly, the report said, but the summit is still a long way off.

The economic crisis has added to the stress of every member, the report said. The crisis was not caused by current staff but has created a conundrum. While the Stewardship Ministry Team and others in leadership have been critical that staff has not talked enough about money matters, some FLC members have been critical that there has been more talk on this subject than they remember in the past.

The report said the congregation has grown to 2,000 members with more than 600 attending worship services, making FLC among the largest 1% to 2% of ELCA congregations. FLC is no longer the small intimate church where everyone knows everyone and the pastor is the center of ministry.

Pastor Jeff said, "You left being a small church many, many years ago. This leaves our congregation with some very important work to do. I suggest we seek the Lord and solve these issues together."

Interim Associate Pastor – Pastor Michelle had provided a written report. It said 49 people had signed up for the "Space for God" study. The study would conclude with a discussion and dreaming session about future opportunities for adult education, even with the absence of an associate pastor. The report said she had been working in partnership with pastors from three area churches to provide training for lay people who serve as lay ministers. Four former Stephen's Ministers from FLC had accompanied her to a gathering called "Blessing of the Hands." The first session's topic was listening and the next topic would be on prayer. The group will meet four times a year for mutual ministry support and training. Pastor Michelle also plans to offer a refreshment course and training for people who would like to help with visitation at FLC. The report said she had offered pastoral care to shut-ins, brought communion to residents at Trinity Care Center and worked with two families who had loved ones in other care centers. Another "Prayers

Around the Cross” service was planned for Monday, March 30, at 7 p.m. Her goal, the report said, was to train a team that would be able to lead this service in her absence.

MINISTRY TEAM REPORTS

Neurauter said he had received reports from most of the ministry teams. The Planning team had not met the previous month.

Children’s Ministries – The report indicated that names have been chosen for the education rooms as an effort to help people find them more easily. Sunday and Wednesday School children would be singing at Palm Sunday weekend services. A 50/50 event at Farmington Lanes was proposed as an extra fund-raiser for Bay Lake Campers. Coming events included a Thrivent-sponsored “Parents, Kids and Money Matters” and “Parents, Teens and Money Matters” gathering from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. on March 15; a recital and fund-raiser for Last Hope Animal Shelter on Sunday, May 3; and a family campout on the church grounds August 8th and 9th.

Fellowship and Service – This team had discussed serving coffee and treats following the Holden Lenten services; organizing and cleaning the pantry and checking stock; and setting a tentative date of June 11th for the Salad Luncheon, including asking for donations of ingredients along with salads and desserts.

Global Missions – The group had discussed the Munch for Missions event planned for April 5th, which would be the kickoff week for restarting the Fair Trade Lutheran World Relief Coffee/Tea/Chocolate/Cocoa sales. Proceeds will support Mission Tanzania and Global Missions. Fourteen people had expressed interest in the global mission ministry team. They would be personally invited to the next team meeting.

Property – The team had addressed issues with a sanctuary screen and moisture collecting in a glass door and replaced a can light. Birch planned to contact Airtech for a replacement HVAC maintenance handbook. A credit of approximately \$320 was expected on the FLC gas bill.

Stewardship – Beissel had submitted a written report. At the meeting, he said that Wells Financial had prepared documents for renewing the FLC mortgage. The five-year balloon mortgage is very similar to the current mortgage and will have an interest rate of 5.5%. There will be no charge for the refinancing. Beissel called it “a simple in-house re-do.” He said all options had been exhausted, including interest-only payments. He said Pearson, Brownawell, Christensen and himself had worked on the mortgage refinancing. When the documents arrive, Beissel said he would send them as a PDF file via e-mail to the Council. He made a motion to move forward with the renewal pending any objections following receipt of the e-mailed documents. Wenck made the second. Motion carried.

Worship and Music – Discussion topics had included low attendance at Altar Guild meetings, an approval process for changes to the building’s décor or internal structure, and utilizing the entry space between the doors as an information and welcome area. Doreen Bondy, Director of Music Ministries, reported that the contract with India Children’s Choir had been canceled with no penalty, although she would like to have the group perform in the future. The decision was made not to schedule musicians for 2009

who charge a fee or donation. The SCRIP program is working well with several new people interested in volunteering. Rally Sunday ideas were discussed, along with Palm Sunday and Saturday. For Maundy Thursday, the group discussed using the senses to enhance worship experiences, including baking bread for communion just prior to services. Several ideas were offered for stimulating the senses during Good Friday worship. Easter service times were discussed, along with the need for additional ushers during Holy Week. As an enhancement to Lenten Sunday services, the congregation would have the opportunity to request hymns for future services.

Youth Ministries – Discussion included the fact that 16 young people had signed up to attend the National Youth Gathering with room for four more. A female chaperone had been obtained for the Red Lake Reservation mission trip, with 13 youth and 3 adults committed to the trip. The benefit concert for Andrew Kipley’s medical expenses, featuring a concert by Gary Ferguson, had raised more than \$2,000. The response from those who attended the FamFest event was positive. Signup was continuing for the Money Matters program hosted by Thrivent. A College Planning Night hosted by Thrivent was set for April 16. The Bay Lake Retreat for camp counselors was to be held the weekend before campers arrived. A \$30 fee would be charged for each counselor due to increased fees from Bay Lake. Ten middle school-aged youth had participated in a ReVamp Weekend Retreat. A lock-in for middle-schoolers would be held March 27 and a 30-hour famine/Box City event for high school youth was discussed. A representative of Impact Fundraising presented an opportunity to sell vendor discount cards to raise money for youth trips. Volunteers were needed to help at the pancake griddles during the Easter breakfast. The plant sale fundraiser was scheduled for mid- to late-March.

OLD BUSINESS --

Development Task Force Update – The Council received copies of handouts that are being given to FLC members during the Task Force’s member visits. Neurauter said the campaign is focused on long-term commitment as opposed to short-term. Members are being asked to give at least 1% above what they gave in 2008.

Speech to Congregation – Neurauter said he was looking for feedback on the results of his recent speech to the congregation. He said he had heard some good feedback and some that was not so good.

NEW BUSINESS –

Confirmation Evening of Sharing – Neurauter announced that the Confirmation Evening of Sharing was scheduled for 7 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13th. He encouraged all Council members to attend. The Council would provide treats and clean up after the event.

Sunshine Fund – Neurauter said the Council’s Sunshine Fund, which contains monies contributed by Council members, is used to purchase flowers for certain events such as hospitalizations, births and deaths. He said he had ordered flowers from the Council and staff for Steve Swenson’s funeral.

Representative to Northfield Retirement Annual Meeting – Neurauter said that Diane Randall had received an e-mail and he had received a telephone call seeking an FLC

representative for the Northfield Retirement Center's annual meeting scheduled for 2 p.m. on April 5th. Wenck volunteered to attend.

Housing Allowance – Neurauter said that approval of the Senior Pastor's housing allowance is a formality that is handled on a yearly basis. Basically, \$2,000 each pay period of Pastor Jeff's salary is designated as a housing allowance. Johnson made a motion to approve that designation, seconded by Birch. Motion carried.

Budget – Neurauter reminded Council members that they need to continue to be aware of the budget situation and prepared to react

Endowment Fund – He asked if the interest from the Endowment Fund could be used to help pay an intern's salary in lieu of paying for a scholarship to an FLC student. Wenck said she would investigate the matter with the Endowment Committee, Pastor Jeff would contact the seminary to see if a student might be available during the next seminary term.

1% Campaign – Neurauter said it was important that all Council members as leaders of the congregation be committed to the 1% Campaign. All Council members in attendance and Pastor Jeff indicated they had made that commitment.

Global Missions Motion – Otterness made a motion that the FLC Council approve Global Mission fundraising events for the year 2009 to include but not be limited to Munch for Mission, Mission Sunday and the restarting of the Fair Trade Lutheran World Relief Coffee/Tea/Cocoa sales. Beissel made the second. Motion carried.

Neurauter announced that a spring retreat for all Council members and ministry teams was scheduled for Saturday, April 25th.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:26 p.m. on a motion by Otterness with a second by Birch. Motion carried.

Wenck provided closing devotions, followed by the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Lea Guenther
Recording Secretary

MEETING REMINDERS:
Executive Board: Tuesday, April 7, 2009
Council Meeting: Tuesday, April 14, 2009

