

## Trinity Congregation Council Minutes February 17, 2026

**Present:** Kevin Brown, Lynn Buske, Henry Butler, Robin Drout, Karla Halloin, Greg Helgeson, Mary Schoenknecht, Denyse Schroeder, John Schroedl, Gail Schulner, Michelle Zumwalt, Craig Olsen, Pastor Patrick Patterson, Pastor Tom Westcott

**Absent:** Erik Dovre, Dawn Marcott, Jacqueline Strayer

1. **Call to Order:** President Karla Halloin called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.
2. **Devotion:** Lynn Buske provided an opening devotion.
3. **Approval of January Council Minutes:** The January Council minutes were approved as written.
4. **Approval of January Financial Report:** Treasurer Craig Olsen reviewed the January financial results. Income for the month exceed expenses by about \$19,000. This gives us a fiscal year-to-date surplus for about \$92,000, which is a good place to be as we head into the second half of the fiscal year. Craig noted that our fiscal year-to-date income is very similar to last year, but that our expenses are lower than a year ago. This has contributed to our current surplus.

Pastor Patrick reported on plans for this year's stewardship campaign. A mailing will be sent to the congregation on March 9 and the following two Sundays will include a message related to stewardship. The campaign will wrap up with return of pledge cards on Palm Sunday.

The January financial report was approved as presented.

### 5. **Pastors Reports:**

Pastor Tom supplemented his written report with the following:

- Easter this year will include services at 7:00 a.m., 8:15 a.m., and 9:45 a.m. The 7:00 a.m. service is being tried to see if there is more interest in this time, rather than a service at 11:00 a.m.
- Pastor Tom's sabbatical begins in three months. He shared some information and a handout on his latest plans.
- A question was asked about plans being explored for having a UWEC social work intern at Trinity and he explained a bit more about the conversations he has had.

Pastor Patrick supplemented his written report with the following:

- A question was asked about problems with the organ that would need to be addressed through major reconditioning. He explained that this is not an immediate problem, but one we need to start considering. Such a reconditioning would cost a significant amount and would need to be scheduled several years in advance. Most organ repair services are booked a number of years in advance with major rehab projects.

There were no other questions or comments on the written pastor reports for the month.

## 6. Staff and Committee Reports:

The following questions or comments were made on the written staff and committee reports for the month:

- It was noted that the food pantry report indicated that the number families served in January was down 22% from a year ago. It was suggested that this is probably an anomaly more related to calendar and weather conditions rather than to any actual decrease in need.
- Mary Schoenknecht reported that the Friends of Flynn committee has been helping with the Flynn food pantry, both financially and with volunteers. She also reported that the School District is eliminating the partnership coordinator positions at its schools. Therefore, our contact with the school will be changing.
- Pastor Tom pointed out that Kim Dewey's report for Noah's Ark preschool and ECE indicates that one preschool staff member and one ECE staff member will be leaving after this school year. Work is underway to fill the available positions.

## 7. Old Business

- Clairemont House:** Pastor Patrick reported that following approval of the sale of the Trinity Endowment's East Clairemont Ave. house at the Special Congregation Meeting on January 25, closing on the sale was completed. The proceeds from the sale have been forwarded to the Endowment for investment.
- Photo Directory Update:** Pastor Tom reported that the final items for the photo directory have been submitted to Universal Church Directories. The cover and introductory pages prepared by Katie Conner turned out very well.
- Rental Property:** The property is still unoccupied and we are considering offering a free month's rent and/or lowering the monthly rental price in order to make the property more attractive. On January 25, a leak was discovered in the hot water piping to the living room radiator. The boiler was shut down and staff member Don Peterson capped off the pipes to the leaking radiator and restarted the boiler. Service Pro was contacted to clean up water that leaked onto first floor and basement areas. During the cleanup, an additional water leak occurred when the kitchen sink faucet was left running. This was quickly shut off when discovered. There was little actual damage as a result of the water leaks. Pastor Patrick commended Don Peterson for his quick reaction and extra efforts to address the problems.

## 8. New Business

- Vision Plan "Movement to Greater Advocacy" and ELCA Social Statement "Faith & Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All":**
  - Vision Plan: Pastor Patrick explained that Trinity's Vision Plan is about four years old and it is appropriate that we review what we have accomplished. The Council will have a presentation on each movement of the Plan over the coming months and

then discuss where we go from here. The first movement is the “Movement to Greater Advocacy.” The goals are:

1. Partnering with the synod to locate the Latinx outreach within the ministry of our congregation: **Accomplished for 2-1/2 years** with Deacon Lidixe Montoya serving as Trinity staff 50% of the time.
  2. Paying special attention to using nongendered language in worship and other expressions of Trinity’s life together: **Partially accomplished.** Determined difficult to implement in the case of prayers, hymns, and similar items of worship with a long history in their present forms.
  3. Convening community leaders around issues of injustice facing our community: **Still to be accomplished.**
- ELCA Social Statement “Faith & Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All”: Related to the first movement of our Vision Plan is the social statement that was approved by the ELCA at the Churchwide Assembly last summer. The statement encourages ELCA members, congregation, and ministries to engage in civic action in support of their neighbors and community. A copy was provided to each Council member this month and to the Strive Committee for future consideration.

**b. Palm Sunday Path:** The Palm Sunday Path is an idea that originated with the group ISAIAH from Minnesota. It is a theme that is being supported by several groups, included the ELCA bishops and the Wisconsin Council of Churches. Our Wednesday services during Lent will use “Palm Sunday Path” as their theme. An Eau Claire faith- based group is working on organizing a March 29 Palm Sunday procession in Eau Claire in support of “Love of Neighbor”. Use of Trinity’s parking lot for the procession has been requested and granted. Pastor Patrick is participating in the planning and will keep Trinity updated on planned activities.

**c. Upcoming Events:** The following upcoming events were shared and briefly discussed:

1. Sunday, April 12: 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Hmong in Eau Claire. Guest speakers at Sunday services, displays, and food are planned. A small group will work with Pastor Patrick to plan this event.
2. Sunday, August 9: Budget Forum
3. Sunday, August 23: Annual Meeting
4. Sunday, September 13: Rally Sunday
5. Sunday, September 13 or September 20: FriendFest. Date to be determined. Planning to begin at next month’s Council meeting.

**d. Council Appointment:** Heather Kapanke has indicated a willingness to fill the Council position vacated by Natalie Hanson. Heather is a long-term member of Trinity and served on the Council a number of years ago. The Council can appoint Heather to fill this position until the next Annual Meeting (August 25), at which time Heather can be presented for election by the congregation. It was moved, seconded, and approved to appoint Heather Kapanke to the Council until the next Annual Meeting.

**9. Closing Prayer:** Pastor Tom provided a closing prayer.

**10. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:14 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Robin Drout  
Secretary