

Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes: 2022 (approved 6-25-2023)

Date: Tuesday, November 1, 2022
Time: 6:00 PM

Place: Sumner campus, Sanctuary
Type: Regular annual meeting

Participants: indicates attendance

LLB Members: Jud Jesske (Chair), Vacant (Vice-Chair), Rick Stowell (Secretary), Kyle Kaldahl (Treasurer, NV)
 Chris Cox, Heidi Cuca, Jeff Lake, Gary Pickering, Kristy Plander, Shayla Reed

Invited staff / presenters: Autumn Crable (Director of Staff Engagement)
Pastor Michael Eckelkamp (Director of Ministries)
Aaron Hedlund (Director of Adult Discipleship)
Bill Steinbauer (Director of Caregiving and Outreach)

Congregational members signed in for voting purposes. Quorum existed with 53 members signing in and eligible to vote.

Desired Outcomes of the meeting:

- Proposed amendments to the Constitution and the Bylaws are approved
- LLB members and officers are elected
- Members are updated on main ministry efforts and financial status.

Agenda

Call to order Acting Chair Jud Jesske called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and Autumn Crable gave opening prayer.

Recognition of Tom Lorenz: Jud recognized the life and service of Tom Lorenz, who passed away in October while serving the final year in his role as Chairman.

Business Item:	Purpose: Inform/Discuss/Decide	Notes provided prior to meeting	Duration
1. Constitutional amendments	Vote on proposed amendments (all voting on amendments was done by individual voting members present submitting a confidential tally sheet)	Proposed amendments were read (via video recording) at all worship services during weeks of October 16 th and 23 rd ; wording and justification of changes were posted on website > two weeks prior.	20 minutes

Shayla Reed, LLB Policy Committee Chair, navigated discussion of proposed amendments, which included:

- a) **Update the Agent of Service:** Our constitution needs to be updated to reflect Pastor Eckelkamp serving as our Director of Ministry. Heidi Cuca moved (Tom Volk 2nd) to approve amending Article 9 to read as follows:
*"The street address of the Congregation's registered office shall be 4325 Sumner Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68506. The Congregation's registered agent at such office shall be the Rev. **Michael Eckelkamp.**"*

Discussion: No comments or questions were received.

Motion passed by a tally of 50 for and 0 against.

- b) **Notice of Proposed Amendments:** In light of our large and growing congregation, our constitution needs to be updated to reflect that other methods of providing notice to the congregation are available that are more efficient and effective than reading changes during worship services. Josiah Janke moved (Dick Agee 2nd) to approve amending Section A of Article 11 to read as follows:

"This Constitution may be amended, with the exception of the Articles listed in Section B of this Article, by the members of the Congregation at a regular or special meeting at which a quorum is present, by two-thirds of the votes cast, provided that the intention to amend the Constitution, and the wording of the amendments

*proposed, shall be **made available to the Congregation in a reasonable manner** for two (2) consecutive weeks prior to the date upon which the amendment is presented for action.”*

Discussion: Several comments were raised including:

- Reading proposed amendments at worship services has merit for a lot of the membership [even if it does not remain as a requirement];
- Proposed amendments need to be posted in very prominent locations for easy in-person and remote access; and
- Important information like amendments need to be communicated in ways that consider those with limited access and/or audial/visual impairment.

Motion passed by a tally of 44 for and 6 against.

- c) Grant the LLB Authority to Extend Calls to Non-Pastoral Called Workers: To address the increasingly frequent need for congregational meetings to extend calls to non-pastoral candidates and potential consequences of resulting delays in extending calls, the proposed amendment seeks to grant the Lay Leadership Board authority to approve and extend calls to non-pastoral called worker candidates. Tony Saeger moved (Bruce McKeag 2nd) to approve amending designated area 1 of Section A of Article 5 to read as follows:

“The Congregation hereby delegates its power to the Lay Leadership Board (the "LLB"), except in the following designated areas:

1. *The calling and removal of a pastor or **the removal of a Called Worker;**”*

Discussion:

- Dirk Reek moved (Tom Volk 2nd) to amend the motion to change the word “power” to “authority” in Article V, since God confers authority [not His power] to manage and administer. While there was agreement about the intent of this change, there were concerns that the word “power” exists in several places in the Constitution and this change of wording in one article would not achieve the desired result. Some shared concerns that acting on amendments to properly proposed and communicated amendments would require restarting the process, although Shayla conveyed that – from her discussions with LCMS NE District – this should not be the case. It was determined that this motion was related to, but distinct from the originally proposed amendment. For optimal clarity, attendees were asked to create an item “3.5” on their ballot to vote on this motion to amend the proposed amendment. Motion failed to achieve a 2/3 majority by a tally of 27 for and 17 against.
- Clarification was requested about application to pastors called to serve in a non-pastoral position. Shayla responded that the LLB had considered this issue – the situation has already occurred at CL – and the response obtained from LCMS District was that congregations must approve all calls of pastors regardless of the positions to which they are being called.

Motion passed by a tally of 44 for and 3 against.

Decisions: Each of the three proposed amendments was approved to move on for review by LCMS NE District.

2. Bylaws amendments	Vote on proposed amendments	Wording of proposed amendments and justification for changes were posted on website > two weeks prior.	30 minutes
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Shayla navigated discussion of proposed amendments, which included:

- a) Annual Congregational Meeting Date: In order to allow sufficient time to compile a complete report for the congregation prior to the annual meeting, improved flexibility is needed in scheduling the meeting. Dirk Reek moved (Gary Pickering 2nd) to approve amending Section 1 of Article II to read as follows:
- “The Annual Meeting of the Congregation shall be held **during the month of November** of each year for the purposes of receiving a report on the ministry of the Church, electing the officers of the Church and the at-large members of the LLB, and conducting business with regard to any other matters properly brought before the Annual Meeting.”*

Discussion: Does this work in concert with the new fiscal year? Seems like a mismatch between fiscal- (Jul-Jun) and calendar-year plans. Clarification was provided that LLB approves the budget, so a separate Congregational meeting is not required for approving the budget.

Motion passed by a tally of 49 for and 1 against.

- b) Notice of LLB Meetings: To help ensure greater access and lead time to notice of upcoming meetings of the LLB, the means of making such announcements are proposed to be expanded and required advance notice is to be increased. Heidi Cuca moved (Tony Saeger 2nd) to approve amending Section 4 of Article V to read as follows:

*“The LLB shall meet at least quarterly at a time and place determined by the Chairman. The time and place of each regular meeting of the LLB shall be published in **a reasonable manner, including but not limited to, the Church’s Internet site, in a timely manner** prior to each meeting. The Chairman, any three (3) members of the LLB, or the Senior Pastor may call special meetings of the LLB by informing members of the time and place of such meeting on not less than **seven (7) days** prior notice. The time and place of each special meeting of the LLB shall be published **on the Church’s Internet site** not less than **seven (7) days** prior to such meeting and announced during all worship services immediately prior to such meeting. Minutes of all meetings of the LLB shall be maintained.”*

Discussion: No comments or questions received.

Motion passed by a tally of 50 for and 0 against.

- c) Notice of Proposed By-Laws Amendments: The Congregation will be better informed on proposed amendments to the Bylaws when notification is provided in advance of voting at a Congregational meeting. Dirk Reek moved (Josiah Janke 2nd) to approve amending Article IX to read as follows:

*“These Amended and Restated By-Laws may be further amended by the favorable vote of a two-thirds (2/3s) majority of those present at an Annual Meeting or a special meeting of the Congregation. Proposed amendments shall be presented in writing at such a Congregational meeting **and notice of such amendments shall be provided to the Congregation in a reasonable manner, two weeks prior to such Congregational meeting.**”*

Discussion: No comments or questions received.

Motion passed by a tally of 50 for and 0 against.

- d) LLB Action during Extenuating Circumstances: Some allowance is needed for the Lay Leadership Board to quickly and efficiently respond and/or act during exceptional circumstances. Gary Pickering moved (Tony Saeger 2nd) to approve amending the Bylaws to include Article X to read as follows:

“In extenuating circumstances, the Lay Leadership Board, by majority vote, may take action the Board deems necessary to address exceptional and/or unusual circumstances. Any such action must be reported to the congregation in a timely and reasonable manner.”

Discussion: Comments and questions revealed some general unease about the need for providing this authority, especially with unclear limits on the authority being granted.

- Responses from LLB noted that the recent situation of navigating operation through a pandemic while transitioning church leadership exposed the board and church staff to making ‘executive decisions’ that were problematic due to time constraints not fitting normal timelines for full Congregational engagement and the void in policy guidance. It was also pointed out that the Congregation retains authority to overrule LLB decisions.
- A consensus point was that the glue to this amendment is the obligation of the LLB to report any such actions to the Congregation in a timely manner.

Motion passed by a tally of 33 for and 17 against.

- e) Grant the LLB Authority to Extend Calls to Non-Pastoral Called Workers: To properly align the Bylaws with the amended CL Constitution, the proposed amendment seeks to grant the Lay Leadership Board authority to approve and extend calls to non-pastoral called worker candidates. Dirk Reek moved (Shawn Schulenberg 2nd) to approve amending the first listed matter of Article 1 in the Bylaws to read as follows:

*“Call or removal of any Pastor or **removal of any Called Worker**. Only such candidates shall be called and elected to serve as pastor(s) (ministers of religion ordained) or as ministers of religion commissioned as are eligible for a call in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and profess acceptance of, and pledge faithful adherence to, the Confessions of this Congregation as set forth in Article 2 of its Constitution. Sufficient grounds for removal of a Pastor or Called Worker shall be persistent adherence to false doctrine, scandalous life, willful neglect of official duties, or evident and protracted incapacity to perform the functions of the office to which the individual has been called. Charges on any of these counts shall be carefully investigated by the Lay Leadership Board (the “LLB”). The LLB, after consultation with the appropriate officers of The Nebraska District of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, shall notify the Congregation of the matter and shall submit the matter for action.*

Discussion: No comments or questions received.

Motion passed by a tally of 44 for and 5 against.

- f) LLB Meeting Minutes: Timely review and posting of minutes is desirable and current wording in the Bylaws refers to meeting intervals that may be too short or too long to facilitate this properly occurring. Josiah Janke moved (Michael Jank 2nd) to approve amending the Secretary’s duties in Article VII of the Bylaws to read as follows:

*“The Secretary shall record the proceedings of the Congregation’s meetings and the LLB meetings, register all members attending the meetings, and submit minutes for **timely review and approval**.”*

Discussion: Timeliness is needed. What is inferred by “timely review”?

- Issues seem to differ for LLB meetings compared to Congregational meetings. LLB meeting minutes are being posted too long after next meetings [typically held on monthly basis], whereas the time between annual Congregational meetings (12 months) is too long to wait for approval.
 - o Lag times in posting of LLB meeting minutes can be reduced [without a change in policy] via improved communication by the Secretary, as minutes are being reviewed on a regular [monthly] basis.
 - o A change in policy is needed, however, to allow LLB to develop means of getting minutes of Congregational meetings reviewed and approved [and posted] in a shorter timeframe.

Motion passed by a tally of 37 for and 10 against.

Decisions: Each of the six proposed amendments to our Bylaws was approved.

3. Elections	Elect board members and church/LLB officers	Bios of new-member nominees were posted in advance of meeting	10 minutes
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LLB members: The following candidates were nominated to serve on the LLB:

Return for 2nd term: Jeff Lake and Rick Stowell

New to LLB: Lori Johnson and Cole Weihe

Shawn Schulenberg (Gary 2nd) moved to elect Lori and Cole as new members and re-elect Jeff and Rick.

Discussion: Introductions of nominees were requested and made.

Motion passed.

LLB officers: The following candidates were nominated for office:

Jud Jesske, Chair; Jeff Lake, Vice-Chair; and Rick Stowell, Secretary

Lori Johnson moved (Tom Volk 2nd) to approve the slate of officers. Motion carried.

Decisions: All nominees for serving new or 2nd terms on the LLB were elected.

Nominees for serving LLB officer positions were elected.

4. Minutes	Vote on past Congregational Meeting minutes	Minutes for the eight meetings held over past two years were provided in handout.	5 minutes
<p>Tom Volk moved (Shawn Schulenberg 2nd) to approve the minutes from the 2020 congregational meeting. Motion carried.</p> <p>Todd Elton moved (Tom Volk 2nd) to approve minutes from voters meetings held for the purpose of extending calls during 2021 (4/11, 6/28 and 10/24). Motion carried.</p> <p>Tony Saeger moved (Dick Agee 2nd) to approve the minutes from the 2021 congregational meeting. Motion carried.</p> <p>Todd Elton moved (Gary 2nd) to approve minutes from voters meetings held for the purpose of extending calls during 2022 (2/7, 4/10 and 8/21). Motion carried.</p>			
<p>Decisions: Minutes for [8] congregational meetings held over the past two years were approved.</p>			
5. Treasurer report	Highlight financial picture	Information provided in handout.	10 minutes
<p>Kyle Kaldahl noted that our <u>transition to one set of books</u> is complete. He highlighted the work of the FOC, including regular preparation of income statements, balance sheets, and statements of cash flow and designated funds.</p> <p>Kyle reported that <u>Fiscal year 2021-22</u> ended in the black by roughly \$100,000, largely due to salary savings from open positions. CL finances are now in the black by about \$100k for <u>Fiscal year 2022-23</u>.</p> <p>Discussion: Kyle and Pastor Eckelkamp each responded to a request that they speak to the trend toward meeting budget by being understaffed; the common gist was that efforts are needed to increase GF giving, which will help retain flexibility to hire staff as well as improve overall ability to meet budgetary needs. Kyle responded to a question about use of PPP money; all PPP money received was expended for salaries, per requirements – which freed up funds to meet other expenses (details on how ‘PPP-related salary savings’ were expended can be found in LLB meeting minutes from late 2020 and early 2021).</p> <p>Kyle highlighted the 40-50-60 guidelines and our status on each (all ‘pass’ where applicable).</p>			
<p>Decision: NA</p>			
6. Congregational ministry update	Inform on priorities; introduce new staff		20 minutes
<p>Pastor Eckelkamp discussed his priorities for desired outcomes in the coming year:</p> <p>Financial viability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support for ministry, staff ○ Facility care (address maintenance needs, cramped for space) ○ Speak to and celebrate sacrificial giving <p>Consistent communication of vision and direction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partner as one ministry <p>Pastoral care to staff and leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Need a congregational effort in overall caregiving – can’t be done by one or two people <p>Volunteering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Build commitment by individuals and to training ○ Be present both within our congregational community and in the surrounding community ○ Nurture stepping into the life of a neighbor and showing that we care 			

Pastor Eckelkamp introduced new staff. Two newly hired directors highlighted their respective roles and priorities:

Aaron Hedlund (Director of Adult Discipleship) described his role as identifying potential lay leaders within the Congregation and training them to be released to work within our community.

- He highlighted a 'Forgiving challenge' being planned for Lent.
- He is focused on health – healthy groups grow and build up others.

Bill Steinbauer (Director of Caregiving and Outreach) described his role as building up teams of caregivers to do needed work and build up others. He highlighted a couple of programmatic areas he'd like to grow:

- Stephens Ministers
- Resurrect LERT and sustain as community service providers

Adjournment: Pastor Eckelkamp gave closing prayer and the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m. (motion by Gary Pickering, Tom Volk 2nd).