

**QUARTERLY MEETING OF THE VOTERS ASSEMBLY**

November 21, 2024

*Equipping Every Generation to Live Rooted in Jesus*

**CALL TO ORDER**

Congregational Chairman John Swiertz called the meeting to order at 6:34pm. There were 57 people present: 53 voters including 2 Pastors, and 4 non-voters.

**OPENING DEVOTION**

Pastor Schultz opened with prayer and devotion.

**REGISTRATION & RECEPTION OF NEW VOTING MEMBERS**

4 new members were registered: Israel Mitchell, Pat Dunham, Elizabeth Stec, Jeremy Mielke

**APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Motion to approve the minutes from August 15, 2024 as presented was made and seconded. Minutes were approved.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Vision Implementation Update: John Swiertz**

The Vision Team has continued to meet. The team consists of myself, Pastor Anderson, Pastor Schultz, Jonathan Schulz, and Sue Buettner. We last got together on October 22nd minus Pastor Anderson. We continue to focus our work on two main goals of Growing Participation in Weekly Worship and Growing Small Group Ministry Opportunities.

Sue had put together the weekly worship attendance trends for each service since Covid and shared that with us and the Board of Elders. As a result, I believe the Board of Elders will be putting together a congregational survey to gauge what is going well here at St. Paul, what could be improved, and ultimately how we can get more people involved as we try to establish authentic relationships within our congregation.

We are also excited to start working with the new Board of Parish Ed, as well as our other boards in expanding our small group opportunities in 2025.

**Capital Campaign/Ministry Expansion Update: Mike Yurk & Jason Hasenstein**

- Mike Yurk reported all going well. Steel wall construction going well thus far. Pouring concrete on Tuesday for the second floor, then more walls in December as building takes shape. Water and sewer hookups went well without any complaints. Looking forward to after Thanksgiving and giving Tuesday to continue the fundraising standpoint. We are currently on budget or slightly under, including adding a new phone system for the whole campus and newly remodeled bathrooms in the older section. Question on how to make other doors more accessible for those with disabilities and at Providence Place. Please check with Elders and Board of Parish Properties.
- Jason Hasenstein reported to see handouts to follow along. Very thankful for ALL the support thus far in all the ways. Capital Campaign-highlighting that pledges vary from one to three years extending to 2028. As of Oct, we have \$3.1 million in pledges in total of \$1.3 million received. \$1.8 million in pledges to be received. This puts us well ahead of where we'd be if pledges weren't being honored, so thankful for everyone supporting and fulfilling pledges.

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Promissory notes continue and haven't gone away, still issuing them so if anyone interested, contact Jason. So far, at the end of Oct., \$1.2 million issued to members and Grafton residents. At a 4% fixed rate of interest, it is advantageous for us to do this rather than borrowing money which would be at ~6% interest. We will hopefully receive another \$0.5 million in next month or so, which is great.

External financing and borrowing will be through LCEF. The loan application is currently being reviewed but hopefully will close on this in December and then be able to use as needed to borrow, beginning potentially in February 2025. As of now, the amount to borrow would be ~\$2.6 million by July and then as we receive more pledges we'd pay that principal down. At a 20 year term, the payment would be roughly \$19,000. A 15 year loan would be \$22-23,000/month for principal and interest. We can prepay the principal ahead without penalty.

Construction costs-see handout. We have paid out slightly less than \$1.3 million thus far. Large invoices coming in next few months. We have ~\$2.1 million in cash in the fund to pay down invoices thus far.

Giving Tuesday-Goal will be to raise money for "soft costs" which are only partially in the overall budget. The Endowment Fund approved a dollar-for-dollar match for any church or school member who gives that day who hasn't already given/pledged. This is a great opportunity for those who haven't contributed yet. Stay tuned for more information and reminders as Giving Day approaches.

**Welcome Center Update: Chairman**

Several years ago the Church Council appointed a Welcome Center Committee to look at options and ways that we could improve our welcome center area. For many people coming into St. Paul the Welcome Center is the first impression they get of St. Paul. Things were cluttered and dated. As you have seen, changes have started to take place in the Welcome Center as it gets a fresh new look. The Committee (consisting of Vince Micha, Diana Eggold, David Schultz, and Tracy Schmidt) have put a lot of time and effort into making additional improvements. I am happy to report that new furniture has been ordered for that area and should arrive as well as new lighting (both new can lights and lighting that will wash the stone) I think the new lighting is really going to give that area a fresh new look and highlight the stone work in the that room.

For now that concludes the work of the committee and I wanted to publicly thank them for the time and effort they have put into this. Looking to the future, I know Vince has bigger and better plans for that area and his plans are big.....and expensive so we will have to hold off on that for a while.

Some of the materials for this project were unbudgeted items so please watch your bulletin in the next month or so for an opportunity to make a donation, if you desire, to the improvements that will be taking place. Thanks for all the hard work by all.

**REPORT-DIRECTOR OF FINANCE-**

- Contribution statements reflecting contributions made through October 31, 2024 have been sent out electronically. If you have not received yours by email, please let the Finance Office know and we can print a copy for you or have a copy emailed to you. Additionally, for those that still receive

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offering envelopes, your envelope box for next calendar year is available to pick-up as you leave this evening.

- October 31, 2024 Fiscal Year to Date Financial Overview
  - Direct your attention to one handout reflecting a financial cover sheet. We also have detailed sets of financial statements at the board level. If anyone is interested in seeing a copy of detailed financial statements, please reach out to me or the Finance Office.
  - St. Paul's accounting fiscal year begins on July 1<sup>st</sup> and ends on June 30<sup>th</sup>. The financial summary provided tonight is through October 31<sup>st</sup> covering the first four months of this fiscal year or the initial 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the current fiscal year.
  - Three main sources of income: offerings & memorials/gifts, school tuition, and the extended care center.
  - In these first four months of this fiscal year, the combined offerings, memorials and gifts were approximately \$2,800 (0.5%) higher this year than the same period last year.
  - School tuition and fees is ahead by roughly +\$48,000 (3.3%) from last year.
  - Extended care center income has increased by approximately +\$23,000 (25.9%) this year.
  - Please flip to the other side of the handout, which highlights a summary of expenditures by category through the first four months of this fiscal year.
  - Total expenditures have increased by a little more than 8% as compared to last year.
  - Expenses to highlight are those noted in the year-over-year change column:
    - The vast majority of the overall expense increase will be seen in payroll and other employee benefits, which aligns with past intentions during the budgeting process to reward our best assets which are our staff.
    - Payroll and payroll taxes have increased in the first four months of this fiscal year by more than \$64,000, which is attributed to combination of our overall staff mix as well as the annual wage increases that were effective July 1<sup>st</sup>.
    - Employee benefits refer to St. Paul's contributions into several Concordia Plans pension, retirement, and disability plans for qualifying employees. Similar to payroll expenses, the year-over-year increase in these employee benefits is based on our staffing mix and higher wage bases in the present year.
    - The increase in health insurance is mainly the result of increased health plan premiums that we continue to see rise year after year.
    - My last notable expense category to highlight is our business insurance policies. I mentioned prior voter's meetings that St. Paul's property, liability and umbrella insurance policies through Church Mutual were not renewed effective June 30, 2024. We solicited a number of insurance agents and carriers in May and June and found that the insurance marketplace was not the friendliest environment at that time to obtain new policies. Effective June 30, 2024, we obtained new property, liability and umbrella policies through Cincinnati Insurance Company with same deductible levels and coverage levels as we had prior, but our annual premiums will rise to approach nearly \$50,000 annually.
  - Total cash and money market balance was approximately \$1.4 million.
  - The total dedicated fund balances were approximately \$921,000 million at October 31, 2024. The dedicated funds are specific accounts that were created to set aside funds or track funds for specific groups, activities, or causes.

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- **Annual financial statement audit of St. Paul Lutheran School**
  - At our August voters meeting, I mentioned that the annual audit of the school was underway. An audit is required because St. Paul participates in the Wisconsin school choice program. The fiscal 2023-24 audit of the school began at the end of July. The final audit report was issued in early October. A copy of the final audit report was then submitted timely to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. There were no significant findings or issues identified by the external auditors. St. Paul continues to remain compliant with the Wisconsin school choice program requirements. For anyone interested in a copy of the audit report, please reach out to me or the Finance Office.
- Question from a Voter: Can the Bleeky scholarship bylaws be amended to increase the amount available for scholarships? Answer from Jason-We haven't finished seeking approval from the Bleeky family since bylaws state they have to sign off on it first. Jason will do this and update us.

**REPORTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE BOARDS (printed copies were available at the meeting)**

**ELDERS – Brad Dorn**

- Pastor Appreciation weekend was observed the weekend of October 26. We are grateful for the tremendous job our pastors do each and every day.
- Two pre-election prayer services were held in late October. The services provided an opportunity for attendees to pray for our nation, the upcoming election, and our elected leaders.
- You may have noticed that we now have two acolytes serving at each worship service. The 2025 confirmand class began their service as acolytes and PowerPoint operators in September.
- The board will be looking to fill 4 open vacancies for next year.

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**EVANGELISM – Casey Haas**

- We hosted the church picnic in September and have been discussing next year
- We hosted the new member dinner in October
- Helping provide some funds for the welcome center furniture
- Put up Christmas lights outside of church on trees
- Preparing for Grafton Christmas parade. Decorating float and will be in the parade

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**YOUTH – Nichole Haas**

- There are about 5 CUW students helping with High School Impact youth on a regular basis which has been a huge blessing during Pastor's sabbatical as well as a huge blessing to the relationships being built.
- St. Paul will be sending 36 youth and 7 adults to the Lutheran Youth Gathering in July 2025 held in New Orleans.
- Our youth are blessed by the leadership of Justin Frisque, Pastor Anderson, and Tracy Krueger as they faithfully work with our youth on a regular basis

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**STEWARDSHIP – Tim Hallett**

- The Board of Stewardship coordinated a very successful Ministry Fair in conjunction with the annual St. Paul Fair in September. Feedback has been extremely positive and plans are in the works to continue such an event each year moving forward.
- The Board has been working on updates to our annual high school scholarship policy as well as defining the Board's goals for 2025.
- As we prepare for the new year, the board will be selecting exiting board member gifts and planning communications for the deadlines of scholarship application submissions.

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**CDS – John Federl**

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- Numerous fundraisers have been approved throughout the school year to help raise funds for the annual eighth grade trip to Washington, DC.
- Guardian Angel Extended has requested some changes related to policies, many of these were approved as needed. Extended Care is continuing to see strong growth.
- SPL's NLSA accreditation was completed, and we are in good standing for the next 5 years.
- CDS continues to support faculty and staff in their efforts to achieve higher degrees per our policy standards.
- CDS has approved an increase in Substitute Teacher pay to remain competitive in today's market.
- An Intruder drill was completed successfully in conjunction with the Grafton Police Department.
- Multiple policies were reviewed including: Board Organization and Responsibilities, Administrative Policies for the Principal, Video Surveillance and Monitoring, Medication Distribution, Wellness and Background Checks.

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**PERSONNEL – Christopher Johnson**

The Board of Personnel has been focused on the final version of the Sabbatical Policy which was delivered to the Church Council and Sabbatical committee in June. In addition, the committee has been working to create and publish an Org Chart and help to better clarify and document the internal reporting structure for employees of St. Paul. The org chart and related work is being shared with the leaders of the congregation to drive better clarity.

In addition, the Board has updated various policies related to sick leave, exempt employees, and return to work. It has also reviewed Job Descriptions for Early Childhood Staff, and met with representatives from Concordia Plan Services to review staff health insurance benefits for the upcoming year. Finally, the committee created a recommendation for the Sabbatical Committee on conducting surveys with staff upon the return of Pastor Anderson.

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**PARISH ED – Kathleen Gridley**

- A family activities calendar for 2024-25 has been put together with the goal of having at least one family ministry event each month
- Happy to report that Sunday School is finally full with its roster of teachers
- A variety of bible study opportunities have been available this fall
  - Sunday Morning Adult - topics vary
  - Wednesday Night Study - The Chosen
  - Women's study on Monday mornings (Studying "Pew Sisters")
  - Women's study on Monday nights (Studying "Unexpected")
  - Thursday Morning Men's Study (Bob Kasten - Hebrews)
  - Grief Share led by Pastor Maschke
- Trunk or Treat was held on October 25. 15 cars hosted trunks for the event. Approximately 80-90 kids attended the event.
- 5 families attended the October Veggies & Ice Cream Event
- Tracy Krueger continues to offer Faith Stepping Stones classes (replacement for Cradle Roll) for various ages birth through graduation throughout the year. "Surviving Adolescence" for parents of 5th/6th graders will be coming up this winter.
- Upcoming Events
  - Advent by Candlelight on December 8th at 6:30pm with Dan Paavola speaking
  - Lenten Breakfast will be held on April 5th at 8:30am

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**PARISH PROPERTIES – Jim Lindsay**

- 24 feet of decorative to be installed to hide utilities on the North Side of the church.
- Street connections made for sewer and water.
- Structural steel erected. Some roof panels were installed.

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- Concrete to be poured over Thanksgiving break.
- Roof drains tied in through balcony storage room and drywall repaired. Old windows filled with concrete blocks.
- Small exit door from gym removed and block filled. Replacement door to be installed on east side.
- Kurt Gruetzmacher and Jim Lindsay terms completed this calendar year. Replacements being sought

**PASTOR'S REPORTS**

**Pastor Anderson- on Sabbatical, no report**

**Pastor Schultz-** prior to his report, John thanked all those involved in assisting Pastor Schultz and all of us during Pastor Anderson's sabbatical.

- Sabbatical is going well, great job by everyone who has helped me and we all will be in a better place when it's complete.
- New podcast series-currently on buildings/additions of St. Paul. The building is important but the bigger idea is what happens inside and how those buildings make ministry possible.
- ~50 joined our church and trending upwards in numbers, but we don't want to look so much at the numbers but simply be humble and thankful. Also, so thankful for all the baptisms! Lots of those and more coming-thanks to God.
- Grant from SWD for counseling for members who cannot afford these services. Meant for those people who meet with pastors and need more counseling or their needs are outside our skillset. These funds are already earmarked, but want to let you all know.
- In June, we have elections for SWD leadership. Now calling for nominations, due by end of year, expect for President. If you have a name of anyone, please let someone in leadership know. The vote happens at the convention in June at CUW.

**Pastor Maschke:**

- Back to full time and hip doing well. Leading more funerals with Pastor Anderson gone. I've done more preaching and will be happy when Pastor Anderson is back.
- Greif share went well-thanks for all who helped with it. Many who attended were not from St. Paul, and looking at doing during the day next time.

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

1. Today was our Wisconsin Parental Choice Program September Count Date and Fiscal and Internal Controls Audit. Audit went well and a final report is due in the next two weeks.
2. Staff continues to work through a new reading curriculum this year. This curriculum meets requirements that went into effect July 1 under Act 20.
3. Schoolwide service projects so far this school year have included sending care packages to graduates of the Class of 2019, supporting Baskets of Hope, a Christian organization that gives gift baskets to children that are suffering from diseases like Leukemia, and collecting new pairs of socks for Bob's Under the Bridge Organization here in the Grafton Area.
4. The first trimester has ended, report cards went home today and school is not in session next week.

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**LIVING WORD HIGH SCHOOL REPORT:** no report was offered.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Election & Ratification of 2025 Board Members & Appointments: Chairman**

John explained the slate of candidates which were printed and are out on tables. If anyone is still interested in serving, please let me know and if a voting member, then can be appointed.

Recognized those leaving boards and their service. Names were read aloud and candidates stood (see handout).

Motion, was offered, seconded and approved.

Thank you to all who will begin serving in January!

**Audit Committee Report-Jsaon Hasenstein-**

- In addition to the external audit of St. Paul school annually that I mentioned in my report earlier, we also have an internal audit committee comprised of three St. Paul members. Annually, those audit committee members work with the Director of Finance to independently audit a selection of different St. Paul accounts. For the prior fiscal year, I have identified 3 accounts and am in the process of asking each member of the audit committee to independently audit the activity in one of those accounts. The audit of those accounts remains in progress. I will provide another update at our next voters meeting in February 2025.

**Endowment Committee Report -Jason Hasenstein-**

- No significant updates on behalf of the Endowment Committee to report. The endowment committee did not meet during the third quarter of the year. Our next meeting is scheduled for next month.
- Endowment fund balance was approximately \$1,170,000 as of October 31, 2024. In comparison, the balance was approximately \$994,000 as of October 31, 2023.
- As we reach the new calendar year, please begin to look for announcements regarding the endowment committee beginning to accept grant application requests for next fiscal year's endowment distributions. Each grant application request should be made with the support of one of the boards here at St. Paul.
- Lastly, to highlight one of the other funds overseen by the endowment committee. At this meeting we will highlight the Student Aid Fund, which has a balance of approximately \$147,000 at the end of October. The fund is managed by the Board of Elders. The purpose of this fund is to provide financial assistance to men and women of the congregation that are completing academic requirements for full time ministry (such as pastor or teacher) in the LCMS. Members of the congregation that seek assistance from this fund submit an application to the Board of Elders. Monies available from this fund to award annually is comprised of interest earned as well as any gifts or memorials contributed during the prior fiscal year. The award amount calculation factors in the number of applicants each year and the Board of Elders determines the amount of assistance awarded to each applicant.

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**Cemetery Committee Report-read by John Swiertz**

*Cemetery Committee:*

*Andrew Schwartz*

*Phil Steinke*

*Gil Thiede*

*John Swiertz*

*Jonathan Schulz*

- Summer grass cutting season finished up in mid-October. There were three grass cutting teams who shared the duties over the summer and we appreciate the excellent care they took to maintain the cemetery. (It is not an easy job to cut around all those gravestones.)
- Thank you to... Gil Thiede. Gil keeps the lawnmowers supplied with fuel Gil plants and maintains the new graves. He spends a lot of time picking up branches etc. after storms.
- Thank you to... Rich Musbach. Rich repairs/maintains the lawnmowers when we run into problems. He keeps the water tank full so that loved ones can water plantings.
- Thank you to... Sharon Hawkins for maintaining the plantings near the columbarium.
- A belated thank you to David Schmidt... who kept the cemetery plowed last winter.
- Cemetery clean up... Summer/fall arrangements will be removed after December 5 in preparation for the upcoming holiday season. Please pick up the arrangements on your loved ones graves prior to December 5. Arrangements that are in poor/damaged shape are thrown out. Arrangements (not picked up by December 5) will be placed outside the cemetery garage for one week in case families couldn't get there prior to December 5. After that they will be disposed of.
- The next cemetery clean-up is scheduled for beginning of April 2025 several week prior to Easter.
- Podcast! Released Monday, November 20... Pastor Schultz and Tracy Krueger discussed the origins and history of the St. Paul Cemetery going back to 1876 in our St. Paul podcast series. Be sure to check this out.
- Cemetery plots or a niche in the Columbarium are available by contacting Jean Steinke in the church office.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Next Voter's Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 27, 2025 at 6:30.

The Meeting was adjourned at 7:43PM with prayer by Pastor Maschke and singing of the Common Doxology.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jill Hoven, Congregational Secretary