

CONGREGATION COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: 10/21/25

The October Congregation Council Meeting was held on 10/15/25

Council Members Present: Pastor Bannister, Ashdon Bobbie, Carolyn Cutilli, Alan Divver, Barbara Quinn, Bruce Roper, Carol Schlegel, Jenn Shaw, Janice Vallone, Mark Vallone, Ken Woods, and Louise Woods.

Absent: Kiran Bodamer, Shannon O'Neill, Anna Sweeney

The meeting was called to order by Alan Divver at 6:00 p.m. The scripture was read by Barbara Quinn and the prayer was offered by Pastor Bo.

PERSONS WISHING TO ADDRESS COUNCIL:

Synod Representative – Pastor Linda Manson from the ELCA joined Council via Zoom. She first gave a background of herself and her role in the Synod including congregational vitality and her approach to it. She suggested we focus less on finances and more on vitality. She would like to learn from us what it is we feel we need and how we think our level of vitality is currently.

Carolyn Cutilli said that she feels that it is hard to grow. Alan Divver said engaging outside has been a weak spot. Pastor Bo disagreed and thought that we are growing rather than shrinking, although we could have more of a presence in the community. Linda Manson said that other churches are not growing as a whole. A big reason is that we are not well connected to our neighborhoods/communities. She can provide reports about our community's stats. She would like to see at least one mission insight coordinator to work with Pastor.

A vitality survey should be conducted first, she suggested. That way we can have a more personal plan for our particular congregation.

She said that she could do a "visitor's audit" and just show up on a random Sunday morning at St John's to evaluate our service and atmosphere.

She cautioned that there is no script with specific steps, she needs to get to know us and the makeup of our congregation so that she can make recommendations.

Carolyn Cutilli mentioned other churches have greeters and we do not, but that it may be a manpower issue and Linda Manson agreed that we may have different circumstances and that's why we need to figure out our own steps to take.

Carol Schlegel suggested that we check with newer members and how they perceive our service. Linda Manson pointed out that they would be included in the survey.

Louise Woods said that she felt others have said that one reason they recently joined was because they did feel welcome here.

Alan Divver asked about a line between being friendly vs suffocating and asked her opinion of a middle ground. Linda said it is something we will talk about along our journey together. She also commented that we need to train our greeters and ushers.

Alan Divver put to vote to Council to proceed with the vitality survey – all agreed, none opposed.

Linda Manson will forward the survey and we are to let her know the start and finish dates and once she has the final report, she will set a time to have a conversation with leadership and the congregation about the survey.

Mission Insight – Linda Manson said that we need to come up with one or two people who will do that, and work on it with Pastor at the same time as the vitality survey.

Pastor Bo said that we could imagine running out of money in the future and asked what that would look like, what happens to churches at that point. Linda Manson said that her goal is to not have that happen. She can help find grant money, and work with us to uncover those types of helpful financial things. If we get to that point of running out of money however, the first step would be that we would come under Synod Preservation.

Linda Manson explained that she is an idea person, thinking outside the box to help build the church, the building, and the community to connect together.

Carolyn Cutilli asked about the possibility of a merger and explained that the building is old and expensive to maintain and that we need education on this topic. Linda said that if it comes to that she will help us work through it at that time. Linda emphasized that our main reason for existing is to show Jesus to people. Maybe that will be best served merging, or maybe some other way. We will work through the vitality process to get there. The Vitality Process will take 18 months – 2 years, she said.

Linda Manson asked about the food pantry and Carol Schlegel explained it's run through grants and donations. Linda informed Carol that both the Synod and ELCA and others also have grants available that we could apply for which may also indirectly help the vitality of the church.

Linda thanked us for reaching out to her and Council in turn thanked her for her time and insight and that we look forward to working together.

NEW BUSINESS:

Vice President Alan Divver told Council that Shannon O'Neill has stepped down as Council President. Alan will be assuming the position of President right away and Jenn Shaw has agreed to assume the role of Vice President on a temporary basis.

A Motion was made to nominate Alan Divver for Council President and Jenn Shaw for temporary Council Vice President.

*It was moved and seconded by Ashdon Bobbie / Carolyn Cutilli. **MOTION CARRIED**

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:

*It was moved and seconded to accept the minutes from September 2025 as presented without changes. The motion was made and seconded by Ken Woods / Barbara Quinn. **MOTION CARRIED**

REPORTS:

President, Alan Divver –Attached

Pastor Bannister – verbal report. Nothing out of the ordinary, things have been good. He has been enjoying the surprise bag from the kids.

Attendance – Attached

Finance Committee – Attached Carol pointed out that fund raising helped us (almost) meet the September budget. It was not from increased donations. We still need to increase giving. We finalized the benefits packages for staff. She and Finance are working on the budget for next year. Carol will present the tentative budget to the congregation in December. The all congregation meeting can be in January or February. Carol would prefer January to avoid backdating payroll so much. But if the congregation approves the tentative budget in December, February would be okay.

The approved budget from Finance will be presented December 7th to the congregation, then the annual congregation annual meeting will be held on February 1st. Ashdon will start putting it in the announcements.

Carol acknowledged all the help and benefit that Audrey has been, helping with our insurance and negotiating the costs down.

Attendance is up.

*It was moved and seconded to accept the Finance Committee's report as presented. The motion was made and seconded by Jenn Shaw / Barbara Quinn. **MOTION CARRIED**

UPDATES:

Directory: No progress this month. We will probably go with having people opt in as opposed to opting out. Jess is taking a step back but Alan will be looking for someone to get the directory completed.

Staff Job Descriptions: They are still being worked on and Alan will push it forward.

ONGOING:

Values/Goals: Council wanted to come up with values that are represented by “ST JOHNS”. Louise Woods suggested Sharing for the S in ST and gave a statement about it. Alan suggested Togetherness for the T. Louise said Trusting.

Alan said that reaching out to the community more is a strong goal and thinks that we are improving.

Hymnals: We are using the hymnals again but a plan has not been formed yet on moving forward. Jenn Shaw said that maybe, in leu of what Linda Manson said earlier, that using multiple hymnals may make things more complicated to newer members. It might be better to table this until after the survey.

Executive Transition: This was covered above. Alan will check with Shannon how she would like to inform the congregation of the leadership change or if she will be sending something out.

ADDITIONAL NEW BUSINESS:

- 2026 Budget – Carol Schlegel brought up building use and associated charges for outside organizations. Carol distributed a breakdown of groups, when they meet, and what they pay to St John’s. Carol suggested nobody meet in fellowship hall except for County Caroliers. Other groups could use the Sunday School rooms which are cheaper. Council addressed the inequity of the fees as listed on the handout. People meeting weekly are getting hit with a bigger percentage increase than those that meet monthly. Also, some groups are many times larger than other groups and a standard fee is harder on them. Some groups give checks, others cash. Council went through the list and adjusted the rates to make them as fair as possible. Carol suggested we go with \$40/month for all groups that meet monthly for this coming year.

A motion was made to charge all AA related groups \$40 for any month that they meet. It was moved and seconded by Carolyn Cutilli / Ken Woods. MOTION CARRIED.

- Homeless Protocol – Alan Divver explained that a homeless person came to the door and asked for a trash bag and there was concern that there is no protocol for what to do when someone is alone in the building and someone approaches it. Ashdon said that she does not let anyone in if she is the only person here. Alan would like something in writing to leave in the narthex to have a procedure in writing as well as a list of resources for the people. All agreed someone unknown should not be let in to the building by someone else if they are the only other person in the building. Alan will create a draft

for approval in November including talking through the door, not opening it and a procedure if a situation escalates (call the police and notify council of the incident.)

Carol Schlegel mentioned that with the weight watchers group, they are propping the door open.

- Michael's 25th Anniversary as Music Director was as of September this past month. Alan will collect from the choir and accept other donations. Chris Brinkworth will make a cake and we will recognize him at an upcoming service.

- Holiday Bazaar – Ashdon said she received a call from someone regarding a vendor not being able to Venmo payment. She had filled out a Google application which was a scam. St John's has no such form on Google, nor does it have a Venmo account. Audrey reported it to the borough police and there is now an announcement on our home page. Jess will also post an announcement on Facebook.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Community Outreach Ministry – See report
- Constitution and Bylaws – No report
- Fellowship Connections – See report – Alan said that they will be doing the trunk-or-treat again this year. Regarding the candles that are for sale, Janice Valone asked if we could incorporate the newer members or people in the neighborhood. (Allow people to buy two, one for themselves and one to give away)
- Generosity Committee – No report
- Hatboro Community Cupboard – See report – Carol said that more families have been coming in. And large donations were received last month as well.
- Kids & Family Ministry – See report – Ashdon said they are looking for kids to help set up the haunted house and adults to help run it.
- Memorials – No report
- Mutual Ministry – No report
- Property – No report, Ken verbally said that the boiler is turned on and working. Alan asked about a smell a couple weeks ago. Carol explained that it was rotting produce from the food pantry. Mark Valone replaced the bulbs in the parking lot and the relined parking lot looks great. Carol said that we had tried to get other A/C estimates. One said that the system has old freon which will be illegal at end of year. One potential contractor for a new a/c unit said that a new one would be bigger and a lot more expensive. He also said that our heater is just as old and

also will need to be replaced at some point. Parts are no longer available for the current unit. So a heater should also be incorporated into our financial planning.

- Social Media – No report
- Stewardship – No report
- Women's Ministry – No report
- Worship & Music – No report – Alan verbally said that they are working on the events coming up including a pre-show dinner before Joseph and also sell snacks during the intermission of the show, which will be on 12/20.

CORRESPONDENCE:

None

CARES AND CONCERNS:

Pastor Bo and council members shared their cares and concerns.

NEXT MEETING: Date: 11/19/25

Meeting Leader: Alan Divver

Scripture: Pastor Bo

Prayer: Alan Divver

Refreshments: Bruce Roper

*It was moved and seconded by Carolyn Cutilli / Bruce Roper to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 p.m. **MOTION CARRIED**

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Roper

Council Secretary