

Bethel Lutheran Church
Congregational Meeting February 7, 2016

Meeting called to order at 12:05 PM by President Nick Arnett

Opening Prayer

Nick Arnett

Mission Statement

Nick & Congregation

Affirmed

Minutes (from previous congregational meeting 8/23/2015)

Nick Arnett

No corrections; minutes approved as written

Senior Pastor Report

Pr. Ben

Pr. Ben noted that one year ago today he had packed up his car and started driving west to begin his work at Bethel. Great things are happening here: there are a variety of ministries for all ages; the school is a blessing to many; Bethel has a strong staff.

We should be aware of national church trends: if membership trends continue, the United Methodist Church will close by 2065; the Southern Baptist Convention may lose 50% of their members in the next twenty years; 2/3 of ELCA congregations are in danger of closing. These facts do not scare Pr. Ben, but we need to be aware and not expect "business as usual" in the near future. We need to minister in a way that touches people's hearts and attracts them to Bethel. The Core Value Meeting Final Report, distributed in this week's bulletin, will help us plan for the future. We are: friendly, caring, serving, joyful, welcoming. We value: Christ-centered community, responding to needs, hospitality to all, spiritual growth, generosity. Bethel needs to continue to strengthen our ministry, especially to youth and children. 61% of population in Bay Area is unchurched: we should look at this as an opportunity rather than a threat. We need to find our voice beyond our deeds: tell the community why we serve. This year's focus verse is Matthew 6:33.

Pastor of Education & Discipleship Report

Pr. Gabi

Pr. Gabi presented a video that was a testimony to what has happened at Bethel over the past year. She thanked the congregation for allowing her to work with Bethel in ministry.

School Board Chairperson Report

Minnie Sudarsanam

- Bible verse Isaiah 40:31
- Enrollment for 2016-17 is underway (90 students vs. 78 in the current year)
- Next year school day will be extended by 30 minutes, starting at 8:30 AM
- New principal Dawn Dubois-Weber has adjusted to her role
- New events: service chapels and spelling bee; with church: Trunk or Treat and Chili cook-off
- Walkathon was a fun and successful fund-raiser
- Annual Fund's brick project will be offered once again in the spring

- After five years as school board chair, Minnie will be replaced by two co-chairs; two more school board members are needed.
- Church members can support the school through prayers, volunteering, and funding. Also, recommend the school to those you know.

Nick thanked Minnie for her years as school board chair. He asked members to endorse the school on Yelp.

Financial Update

Eric Brown

- Recent giving trends: Giving to the general fund this fiscal year, September through January, is \$20,000 above the projected amount. Last year, the monthly YTD cumulative giving varied above and below forecast, but this year it has been consistently ahead.
- Through December, expenses were \$14,000 below budget, with net income (cash basis: excluding depreciation) of \$93,000 (\$20,000 excluding the new bus).

Elections

Nick Arnett

- The nominating committee has selected:
 - Tom McAvoy as President-Elect
 - Patrice Sera & Doreen Baldwin as School Board Co-Chairs
- There were no nominations from the floor for these offices; each was elected unanimously by voice vote.
- Bethel can have four lay representatives to the Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly, June 3-5 in Reno, NV. Nominations from the floor:
 - Rachel Bergren
 - Tony Stieber
 - Hella Bluhm-Stieber
- These three were elected unanimously by voice vote.

Facilities and Bethel Bus Update

Tom Hoegel

- Since he could not be present at the meeting, Tom prepared a video highlighting facilities projects (particularly the Narthex refresh and Fireside Room remodel) and use of the new bus.
- Pr. Ben thanked members who worked on the Fireside Room or donated toward the bus.

President Message

Nick Arnett

- **Thanks:** As his year as president comes to a close, Nick thanked those who have made it fun: the pastors, dealing with a year of transition; the executive committee and its many meetings; the church council, which had an active year; the school board, particularly retiring chair Minnie Sudarsanam; the church and school staff; the audit committee, particularly Tony Stieber who is stepping down after a 3-year term; and all Bethel members.
- **Dorothy Meyer Award** (for participation in Bethel ministries): Minnie Sudarsanam has been selected as this year's recipient. Current and past Bethel School principals, Dawn Dubois-Weber and Marion Abney expressed their gratitude for Minnie's caring leadership.

- **Mission Support:** Bethel's benevolence budget, 7.5% of general fund offerings, is more than double the percentage of the average ELCA congregation. This is almost \$50,000 in the current budget. About half goes to monthly benevolences selected by Bethel's Mission Outreach ministry and other designated offerings. The other half goes to the Sierra Pacific Synod; the Synod sends about half of that on to the ELCA. The publication *Stories of Faith in Action*, available in the narthex, describes how those gifts are used.
- **New Award:** Pr. Gabi proposed an award similar to the Dorothy Meyer award, to be given at the summer congregation meeting, that will recognize participation in ministries outside of Bethel. The award will be named after Eric T. Hanson (1964-2010), a Bethel member who served in many ways, including teaching English at the MaaSae Girls Lutheran Secondary School in Tanzania.
- **Closing Remarks:** Parts of the church are timeless and unchanging; other parts will change in order to respond to the world's needs. Bethel must prayerfully consider how we respond to this challenge.
- **New President:** Nick turned his church key and the microphone over to new President Ann Marie Kenitzer. She thanked Nick and the Executive Committee for bringing her on-board as President-Elect over the past months. She is looking forward to working with the church council, a diverse group of people with many different talents. She is sure the Holy Spirit is at work in Bethel. Every voice is important in discussing Bethel's values. She prays that Bethel can trust in God and listen to where He leads us.

Closing Prayer

Pr. Gabi

Meeting adjourned 1:10 PM

Submitted by David M. Tribby

February 2, 2016