

Congregation Meeting  
September 13, 2020

Note: Due to restrictions on public gatherings to reduce the risk of transmission of the coronavirus, this meeting was held online, using the Facebook live broadcast function.

The broadcast began with an update session convened at 11:30 am.

Pastor Miller welcomed members to the meeting and opened the meeting with prayer.

The congregation joined in singing the first two verses of “We All Are One in Mission” (hymn #576 in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*).

Council President Scott Leonard noted that the Council’s hope, when postponing the Annual Congregation Meeting in May, was that we would be able to meet in person by September. But the extension of shutdown due to the pandemic made this impossible. President Leonard said that the only action item being presented was a proposed amendment to the church constitution to authorize congregation meetings to be conducted by remote technology. This was one of several changes to the ELCA Model Constitution proposed at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly, and was offered as an optional provision. Although the Congregation Council had originally thought this provision impractical in such a large congregation, changing circumstances demonstrated the need for it. In addition, we have the experience of remote broadcasting of worship services and conducting other meetings online. Accordingly, at its August 3, 2020 meeting, the Council voted to recommend adoption of this provision by the congregation. Voting will be by paper ballots.

Pastor Morales reported on the La Sagrada Familia ministry, particularly the regular worship services which are being conducted online on the second and fourth Sundays of each month and are well-attended. On the first and third Sundays of each month, he leads a gospel meditation. There are also faith formation classes online, currently one on church history following an earlier series on Lutheran doctrines. He also reported that he has been conducting apartment blessings, a tradition in many Latin cultures, taking appropriate precautions against the coronavirus. Tutoring sessions for elementary school students are being held each Wednesday on Zoom with the assistance of University of Maryland students. There are also ESL classes on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, with many students participating.

Pastor Miller noted that Pastor Morales has been with us for two years and that the congregation’s call to Pastor Morales was for a limited term. We anticipate bringing to the congregation’s next meeting a proposal to extend his call.

Pastor Miller reminded members that the church facility, including the Christian Day School, and our Hallowood Conference Center remain closed. We are staying in touch with the Montgomery County Health Department and a team of Saint Luke members including physicians is monitoring the evolving recommendations about precautions needed for any public gatherings

to resume. Pastor Miller noted that Dr. Truche had organized a concert to benefit Covid hunger relief efforts of Saint Luke. Dr. Truche also led a hymnfest on August 16 which was very well attended. Contributions were received many contributions in support of our school supplies project.

Vacation Bible School was held online, under the leadership of Melissa Groen. These were very well-attended and there are videos from those sessions online.

Pastor Miller described the confirmation program, using an on-screen illustration of the Saint Luke Faith Formation website to navigate to the confirmation class materials. She thanked Pastor Zawistoski and Deacon Warfield for providing leadership to offer these sessions online.

Pastor Miller urged members to let the staff know of anyone who might need a pastoral visit.

Pastor Miller reported on a number of staff changes. Dan Thomas will be retiring September 20 after 39 years of service as Director of Properties. She also noted that Hallowood Director Gary Pritchett will be retiring on June 30, 2021 after 40 years at Hallowood. A search committee will be set up to seek a replacement. With facilities closed, it was necessary to furlough an administrative assistant, the chef at Hallowood, and all of the teachers in the Christian Day School. CARES Act resources

Pastor Miller noted that in the Spring, Ruth Moorman had retired after 20 years as Financial Secretary, supervising the volunteers who count each Sunday's offering and making deposits in the bank. Pastor Miller thanked Ruth for her years of service and also for assisting with the transition to the new Financial Secretary, Scott McKay. Scott began serving as Financial Secretary earlier and is coming to the church office each week to process contributions received.

Next was a video describing how worship is planned and organized for broadcast. Pastor Miller noted that there are children's services on Thursdays and other activities, but in between those the church staff meets to arrange things for Sunday worship. Dr. Truche described how he used "Sundays and Seasons" worship resource, which suggests music for each lectionary reading, as well as other worship resources. He selects prelude and postlude for each service, anthems, and hymns. Dr. Truche showed the hymnal in which each hymn is marked for the dates that it has been used in worship, which helps to ensure variety in the music we use. He and Pastor Miller meet to finalize the plans for each service and Dr. Truche prepares the service bulletin. The video also illustrated the Wednesday morning "run-through" of the service, during which staff plan how worship leaders will appear on camera, requiring planning of where leaders will sit, when cameras will be cued to focus on a particular area of the chancel, and the placement of microphones. Andrew Vigliotta demonstrated the controls for the audiovisual system, and how a service bulletin marked with cues enabled him to direct the cameras. Jonathan Hernandez explained how the microphones for each of the leaders are fed into the recording and broadcast systems. Dan Thomas and Deacon Warfield then described how the recordings of the morning worship services are edited for posting on the congregation's website. At the end of the video, Pastor Miller thanked all of those who provide support for broadcasting of the Sunday morning services. Pastor Miller noted that future broadcasts of the Sunday morning worship would begin

with the prelude starting a few minutes before 9:00 so that the service could conclude in time to set up the technical support for faith formation classes.

Deacon Warfield, as staff liaison to the Finance Committee, reviewed the financial situation, using a chart displayed on screen. After a decline at the beginning of the year, giving has increased steadily since the shutdown began. The Deacon thanked members for their generous support of Saint Luke's ministries. The chart he showed also showed that expenses had declined, partly from a reduction in utility expenses and other cost control efforts. If these trends continue, he predicted that we might go from a deficit to a surplus within a few months.

Pastor Miller reported that with the advent of broadcast services, people from many locations are now participating in our worship services, and we will consider a membership category for those who participate via the internet.

Pastor Miller introduced Dr. Lynne Yao, chair of the Stewardship Committee, who has also been a key advisor on responding to the covid-19 pandemic. Dr. Yao talked about how she misses seeing members of the congregation and our shared worship and fellowship activities. She noted that we can "see" each other in the comments box on the side of the Facebook page and it is exciting to see people who have moved far away, such as Pastor Hernandez in Mexico. We can see God's love in the comments box as well as in the generosity of our members. Dr. Yao described the faith commitment campaign that is planned. This year, we will have an online pledge as well as cards for those without internet access. She urged members to consider increasing their pledges if possible, remembering that financial changes have made it difficult for some others to continue their usual level of giving.

Pastor Miller invited anyone with questions to email them to [update@saintluke.us](mailto:update@saintluke.us). She then illustrated on the screen the location of pledge card on the Saint Luke website.

Pastor Miller then addressed the question of reopening. Pastor Miller said that she misses meeting everyone personally and really longs for the reopening. But she said that we must remember the importance of safety, noting that Montgomery is still in Phase Two of the reopening plan. To maintain the required distances between members, a very large area around each person or family group must be maintained. When the county enters Phase Three, we may be able to arrange for an 11:00 service. Staff is carefully reviewing the safety measures needed. For example, after groups of people leave an enclosed area, a sanitizing fogger must be used and time allowed for the fumes from that process to be ventilated before other people enter the area.

President Scott Leonard called the business session to order at 12:07 pm. He read the motion presented by Council, which had been emailed to members previously and was also posted on the church website:

C10.08 This congregation may hold meetings by remote communication, including electronically and by telephone conference, as long as there is an opportunity for simultaneous aural communication. To the extent permitted by state law, notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.

He asked each individual member to print and mark a ballot and return it to the church. A quorum of responses is 80, with ballots to be returned by September 27. At that time, the result of the voting will be announced. At the end of today's broadcast (September 13), the congregation meeting will be in recess until September 27. (See note at end of minutes for results of voting.)

Pastor Miller asked members to print their ballots, mark them, and return them to the church promptly. She noted that Associate Members do not have voting rights. She explained the ballot can be mailed or returned to the church in a box that will be outside the door near the church office. If the amendment authorizing remote meetings is approved, we plan to convene a meeting in November to consider election of Council members and officers and other matters.

Deacon Warfield reported that a question had come in about the number of people attending online. Pastor Miller reported that there were over 20,000 views for the Easter service and that each service since has had several thousand views. Many people are also participating in the children's programs on Thursdays as well. She reported that there are people from three countries and Deacon Warfield noted that 20% of our viewers are from outside the metropolitan area.

Pastor Miller led the congregation in prayer.

The session ended with the singing of the third verse of "We All Are One in Mission."

#### ***Results of Voting on Constitutional Amendment***

On September 28, Secretary Ralph Watkins counted the ballots that had been received. A total of 128 valid ballots were cast. One ballot was received from a person who is not an active member and two other ballots were excluded because more than one person had voted on the same ballot. The amendment was approved, with 127 voting Yes, one abstaining, and none voting No.

Ralph Watkins  
Secretary