

Joint Council Meeting (in person, at Shepherd) - February 17, 2026

Present: Pastor Leslie Aska, Phil Smalley (SotV treasurer), Mary Larsen (SotV President), Carolyn Ciaccio, (SotV VP, via Zoom), Larry Aska, Dan Krueger, Diane Johnson Burns, Dale Samuelson, Denise Nesmith, Nancy Benjamin, LaVon Downing, Brian Carpenter, Kevin Nitz, Terry Sittman, Shelley Pierson, Don Wiese, and Susie Smalley (SotV Secretary)

Pr. Leslie opened the meeting by a reading entitled "Getting Acquainted" then we all introduced ourselves and told everyone a little bit about ourselves.

Old Business:

† Presidents' updates:

- First Lutheran:
 - had an awesome annual meeting, and are happy to add a couple people to council
 - celebrated our joint ministry as well as Pr. Leslie's ordination
 - attendance is a little down
- Shepherd of the Valley:
 - Mary & Dan got together last week and talked about items to talk about today!

† **letter of agreement:** The Letter of Agreement for ministry for Leslie Aska to serve as pastor is included in each of our booklets. Council members (especially new ones) were encouraged to look through it and ask questions if they had any.

† **pastor workload report:** Pastor Leslie summarized her average weekly hours and percent split of common ministry activity at both congregations. Most things are close to a 50/50 split, however it was closer to 75/25 for pastoral care / visitation (heavier at First) with an average of 11.3 hours per week dedicated to this. Also 'uneven' in the split was Bible study with a 30/70 split (more hours at Shepherd). She spends an average of 3 hours per week in this category.

- Pastor's present concerns:
 - homebound visits: won't be able to sustain the current number of visits along with all the emergent pastoral needs and funerals. The plan is to adjust to making fewer visits per month to allow her to address other administrative and pastoral tasks that have not been addressed due to time constraints.
 - because of the amount of time she has been averaging (46.3 hours per week), Pastor Leslie is requesting comp time after Easter.
- Pastor's present joys:
 - joint worship
 - scrappy congregations committee
 - musicians at both congregations
 - Bible study at Shepherd
 - relationships
 - Synod presentation on our partnership
 - council & committees
 - sharing resources (Lent postcard: First Lutheran did all the designing and printing; Shepherd paid for the postage and mailed them)

† **financial review and treasurers' updates:** Phil said that we weren't going to go through the reports this evening, as they were all reviewed during the Finance Committee meeting and are printed in this report. Dale said take it home, study it if you want, and come back with any questions! Phil and Dale met this morning to discuss what can be done to combine resources and perhaps save money (for instance, instead of both congregations ordering the same resources and each paying for shipping, let's make one order and split the shipping.)

† **worship attendance:** Sickness and weather have contributed to lower attendance lately. Our combined services' attendance figures lately have been as follows:

- Nov. 30th @ Shepherd: 37 in person, 9 online (around 9" of snow the day prior)
- Christmas Eve @ First: 90
- Dec. 28th @ First: unsure...
- Jan. 18th @ First: ~50
- Jan. 25th @ Shepherd: 43 (very cold temperatures)

Don asked if anyone else is concerned about the decline in attendance and is wondering how we can increase attendance. Where are we going? How do we be invitational? Diane heard, during the last Bible study at Katie's Cup, that Emmanuel Lutheran is going to close. She and her husband are going to invite those members to worship with them at First. Many discussed trying to attract kids; Diane suggested maybe not just those with young kids, but trying to invite/attract middle aged people. Don recalled we (@ Shepherd) used to deliver bread to visitors and suggested we start something like that again. Mary said her son's church has ready-made bags to send home with visitors that day. Diane mentioned that ice cream socials are fun as well.

† **upcoming Lenten worship services:** During Lent, First Lutheran trades off hosting a midweek Lenten service at noon, followed by lunch. Every week, a different church hosts, and for that service a *different* pastor will preach (*not* the pastor at the hosting church). At Shepherd, we will host a simple supper each week at 6pm, followed by the Holden Evening Prayer Service at 7pm. All are welcome to come. Dan asked if it was a potluck; Susie said you don't need to bring any food - just come!

† **Easter Worship (April 5th at Shepherd):** Mary suggested pushing the *music* aspect of Easter worship and making sure we put that on our sign! She had heard from a seminar a long time ago that many times, the #1 reason people decide to attend a specific church is *music* rather than what some may think the top reason would be (denomination).

Shepherd will host a "Continental Breakfast" after service and will provide breakfast pizza, yogurt, fruit; Dan offered that First will provide coffee cakes.

New Business:

† **program year, worship, and calendar discussion:**

- **Congregational Resource Event (CRE):** deadline is Friday if you want to go
- **joint services:** Going very well! We also want to make sure we invite First for things like men's breakfast, Monday Milers, ladies' lunch, Bible study, game days, and hanging the butterflies
- **other cooperative opportunities we envision:**
 - Trunk or Treat (possibly the Friday before Halloween - Oct. 23th)
 - pet blessing (maybe the last Sunday of September? (9/27/26 @ Shepherd))

† **next meeting agenda items:**

- talk about how Lent & Easter went
- discuss upcoming dates of any special services (Christmas & Easter, etc.)

Motion to adjourn by LaVon Downing, 2nd by Dan Krueger. Motion carried.

Next JOINT COUNCIL meeting: May 19th at 6pm at First Lutheran

Respectfully Submitted,
Susie Smalley