

SOTV Council Meeting - April 21, 2026

Present: Pastor Leslie Aska, Phil Smalley (treasurer), Mary Larsen (President), Carolyn Ciaccio, (VP, via Zoom), LaVon Downing (via Zoom), Kevin Nitz, Terry Sittman, Don Wiese, Brian Carpenter (via Zoom), and Susie Smalley (Secretary)

Pr. Leslie opened the meeting by reading from the northwestern Ohio synod entitled *Love Is the Way* "How Do I Find the Energy to Keep Loving When the World Seems to be Going the Other Way", followed by a discussion.

Call to Order:

† **approval of last month's minutes:** Terry motioned to approve; Susie seconded. Approved.

† **approval of agenda:** Kevin motioned to approve; Don seconded, all approved.

New Business:

† **report of the pastor:**

- New schedule (to visit homebound members) is going well.
- Synod news: Pr. is registered and hotel is booked for the Synod Assembly in June
 - SOTV and First's delegates are either in progress or done with that process.
 - next thing to think about is the in-kind donations for Synod Assembly
 - a couple options through LSSI
 - maybe do something jointly with our shared congregations?
- Bible study - going well; she used a study/series she used for seminary class
- Lent services - bittersweet to announce the final one!
- Barb Lutzow's memorial service - Mar. 28th. Family was appreciative.
- Palm Sunday: "glorious" - nice to see more children! Passion reading went very well (members from both congregations participated), music was wonderful, many people were present, especially those who don't come as regularly as others!
- Easter - enjoyed children's time reading a book, many compliments about music and brunch
- June 28th combined service at First Lutheran - possible outdoor service/ice cream social

† **Mary's article:** Mary distributed an article from the Wall Street Journal regarding the *economics* of religion and encourages everyone to read it!

† **outdoor sign:** Mary asked if we could put the banner back out over our sign. Susie explained she only ended up ordering the ones that say, "Worship HERE this Sunday at 10am" and not the other ones, because there was an issue with them staying in place. They were only being held up using bungee cords though, so we need to find a better way to attach them to the sign where they won't get easily blown off. There's also the issue of putting them out during winter, but we could probably figure out a solution. More brainstorming is needed!

† **bulletins:** Last Sunday (April 19), we went back to printing bulletins on smaller paper (8.5x11) with the larger print. The only issue with those was that the music can only be enlarged to a *maximum* of roughly 5.5" inches wide, so it could still be a little challenging for those who can't see as well.

Pastor brought attention to the three bulletins that are printed for the binders for the pastor, assisting minister, and accompanist and asked if there was a way to make those be larger (utilize more of the page) rather than the printed area being the same size as those printed in booklet style. If so, then could we print out maybe a dozen each week so some would be available for folks to choose if they struggle to see the music in the smaller bulletins? She also thought we could maybe even put them into the three-pronged folders rather than stapling them together.

Susie said yes, there is a way! She volunteered to work with Nathi to attain the goal of getting the hymns bigger; we will find a solution that will accomplish that but not create more things for Pastor to proof!

† **school kids:** We offered to give the kids a pizza party for all the work they put in around here at church, but Miss Dale said no. Kris did not take no for an answer and insisted she give them one anyway. That will happen next Wednesday, April 29. Mary bought a card for all the Council members to sign and is passing it around now.

† **shared holidays (Christmas Eve & Easter) combined services:** On Easter this year, for a couple reasons, Scott Aska suggested we keep Christmas Eve and Easter services at the same church as we did this past year: Christmas Eve at First Lutheran and Easter here at Shepherd.

- availability of musicians: It is extremely hard to get an organist to fill in on Easter morning because most churches have their services around the same time. Additionally, Danny's availability here for Christmas Eve is limited because of his obligations at the Catholic church.
- aesthetics: With our bright sanctuary, the beautiful butterflies, and our traditional Easter 'breakfast', our church lends itself better to Easter. Other than flowers, First Lutheran doesn't decorate for Easter like they do for Christmas, and they have no traditions of any type of Easter breakfast or brunch. On Christmas Eve, however, the style and beauty of the church building, the organ, the beautiful decorations, etc. all made for a gorgeous Christmas Eve service.

Our Council here at SOTV agreed that his suggestion makes a lot of sense. During next months' joint council meeting, we will recommend doing just that: have Christmas Eve at First and Easter at Shepherd of the Valley, at least for the near future.

Old Business:

† **visitor welcome gift bags:** ideas of items to include:

- Pastor found some options for Bibles to include
 - NRSV, soft cover, typical book size (~6x8"?), entire Bible ~\$5-\$6
 - ESV, pocket-sized, including psalms, proverbs, and the New Testament ~\$10
 - ESV, soft cover, typical book size (~6x8"?), New Testament only ~\$4
- bookmark? Pastor has some...perhaps we could add our information to them?
- coffee mugs?
 - Susie did a little research online to get personalized mugs and found some from \$5-\$6 on up. Most places have a minimum order
 - Carolyn mentioned that Dollar General had some that were nice and only about \$1.50!
 - personalization: maybe use a Cricut to add our logo / church name, etc. (Susie can ask Zane & Asia for more info)
- small, reusable shopping bag? ...we could even use this as the bag
- stickers? (yes) lots of people put stickers all over their water bottles and laptops
- magnets? (yes) people also love putting magnets on their refrigerators (Susie has been playing around with a new AI assisted logo for the church - both in full color as well as the green)
- pens? - (no) Too big of a minimum order, too common, plus we are planning on quite a bit already!

† **Trunk or Treat:** Mary is enthusiastic about having a Trunk or Treat this year. Carolyn pointed out that last year's was a failure - they ended up ending early because of the lack of people. She believes there are just too many going on around the area. Mary envisions it being more than just collecting candy; that it could include activities, maybe inside the church.

We are unsure if we'll do this or not - we can revisit this topic.

† **constitution:** Phil emailed the Council members a digital copy of our constitution here at Shepherd of the Valley. Chapters 5, 10 - 13 are chapters that deal specifically with our church as opposed to the ELCA Church as a whole.

[Note: Phil added chapter 13 after the meeting when I was working on the minutes.]

† **committee reports:**

- Finance Committee: Phil and John Wolf went through all the various holding accounts and consolidated them. Phil will now begin dating each fund as it is established (as well as whenever it is used) so we can, at a later date, better decide what to do with the funds.
 - Carolyn suggested that the funds that are in the library fund be used for the welcome bags.
- Worship & Music Committee: did not meet this month
- Building and Grounds Committee: met April 7th.
 - they are addressing many things such as doing small repairs, changing lights, making the mowing schedule, getting some holes filled to make mowing easier, and trimming trees.
 - church workday (Saturday, June 13th).
 - parking lot resealed and restriped: getting quotes
 - painting the soffits, window trim, (basically everything that is white)
 - Terry asked his handyman, but he didn't want to take on that big of a job
 - Terry suggested maybe getting quotes for aluminum soffits
 - Pastor suggested splitting the job up
 - asking our members if they would volunteer to get some of it completed
 - hiring out the rest of the jobs such as the high peaks

Motion to adjourn by Terry Sittman, seconded by Don Wiese. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned and closed with The Lord's Prayer

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

Respectfully Submitted, Susie Smalley