

Joint Council Meeting (in person, at First) - May 19, 2026

Present: Pastor Leslie Aska, Larry Aska, Neal Steinhour (1st secretary), Phil Smalley (SotV treasurer), Mary Larsen (SotV president), LaVon Downing, Kevin Nitz, Brian Carpenter, Don Wiese, Susie Smalley (SotV secretary), Dale Samuelson (1st treasurer), Diane Burns, and Dan Krueger (1st president)

Pr. Leslie opened the meeting by leading us in prayer

Old Business:

† Presidents' updates:

- First Lutheran:
 - been hearing a lot of good things about our partnership
 - joint services have been special
 - Dan: "things are going tremendously" and "together we are stronger"
- Shepherd of the Valley:
 - no update

† **letter of agreement:** The Letter of Agreement is included in each of our booklets. Nobody had any questions.

† pastor workload report:

- overall, Pastor feels that she divides her time a little unevenly (45% @ First & 55% at Shepherd). The following is this month's summary of hours & percent of time allocated to each congregation:
 - average of 42 hours per week - improved since our last joint council meeting (fewer deaths)
 - 50/50 split time in sermon prep, administrative functions, worship prep/planning, council/committees, and worship leadership
 - 45/55 split for office hours (1st / SOTV)
 - 30/70 split for Bible study
 - 65/35 split for other ministry events (includes three events, all held at First)
- Pastor Leslie has friends that are also serving in two different congregations. In talking with them about how things are going, Pastor Leslie sees the differences and struggles that they have. She is extremely grateful to have **joint** council meetings (most do not), and happy that both congregations are in accordance with our joint worship services.

† **financial review and treasurers' updates:** (detailed reports are in the booklet)

- First Lutheran:
 - slightly better than the budget!
 - had two deaths as of late; unfortunately, they comprised 40% of their giving
 - looking into sharing/renting their building with other groups/churches, also open to renting the building to people for weddings, even if they're not members and are using a different minister.
- Shepherd of the Valley:
 - also ahead of budget!
 - because quite a few of our members have RMDs now (required minimum distribution for their 401Ks), we have already received over 50% of our income for the entire year
 - we will be voting about sealing/stripping our parking lot later during this meeting (minutes for that meeting at end of this document)
 - Phil is looking into a site called TechSoup - they offer discounts in many tech things like QuickBooks service, devices, laptops, etc.

† **worship attendance:** Average attendance for each church: 35 @ First; 40 @ Shepherd
attendance for joint services has been as follows:

| date | in person | online |
|--------------------------|---|--------|
| Feb. 22, 2026 (@ First) | 44 (unsure of breakdown) | ? |
| Palm Sunday (@ Shepherd) | 76 (48 SOTV; 28 First) | 2 |
| Good Friday (@ Shepherd) | 28 (19 SOTV; 9 First) | 2 |
| Easter (@ Shepherd) | 107 (63 SOTV; 44 First) includes guests | 10 |
| April 26, 2026 (@ First) | 50 (16 SOTV; 34 First) | 7 |

† **upcoming summer 2026 ministry calendar:**

- May 31: joint worship at Shepherd of the Valley
- June 12 & 13: Synod Assembly at Augustana College
- June 28: joint worship at First (ice cream social)
- July 20-31: Pastor Leslie on vacation
- July 26: joint worship at Shepherd
- August 18: next joint council meeting

New Business:

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

- **joint service plans:**
 - Ice cream social: last Sunday of June (28th) at First
 - ...Dan suggested adding hot dogs
 - ...then chips were suggested
 - ...and root beer!
 - Mary asked what people thought about having a “traditional potluck church picnic”. We liked it and decided to try one during the joint service at Shepherd on September 27th.
 - pet blessing at First Lutheran: August 30th
- **Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, and Easter:**
 - this year we did two separate Ash Wednesday services. There were about 15 people at each service - should we maybe combine next year?
 - Yes, to a combined service! - held around 4:30, place TBD
 - We could maybe post a signup sheet for those who need rides and those that need rides, for people who can't make it to service but would like to.
 - ride share signup can be for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday too!
 - mid-week Lenten services: decided to do both locations and times again next year
 - Palm Sunday: traditionally not huge at First, but it has been at Shepherd - we decided to do a combined service again at Shepherd - it was nice! It will be March 21, 2027
 - Maundy Thursday: We did separate services this year - Pastor wonders if we can combine it and still carry out most of the traditions from each church. have it at First (~4:30)
 - Yes, we will do a combined service at First (around 4:30 is when we're thinking)
 - service starts upstairs then during communion go downstairs and gather around the tables - everyone communes each other - bring your small supper!
 - Good Friday: We will again have a combined service at Shepherd at 6pm
 - start service with stripping of the altar
 - Easter and Christmas Eve: from a musicians' standpoint, it works out better to have Christmas Eve at First and Easter at Shepherd again. [Danny (Shepherd's accompanist) is not available Christmas Eve but is on Easter. It is easier for First to find an accompanist on

Christmas Eve.] Aesthetically, First Lutheran 'lends itself' better to Christmas Eve and usually decorates more during Advent than Shepherd does. Likewise, Shepherd 'lends itself' better to Easter. It's brighter and the butterflies in the sanctuary are beautiful.

- Easter Sunday: at Shepherd each year, for the foreseeable future
- Christmas Eve: at First each year, for the foreseeable future

† **backpack buddies**: from Raye Stone: First Lutheran has worked with Constance Lane Elementary in the past and they would like to participate in a "Backpack Buddies" program during the summer. The ministry involves buying backpacks for students to take home with them each week (and bring back each week as well). These backpacks would be filled with shelf-stable food to last children throughout the weekends during which some kids don't have much, if anything, at home. The summer programs run June 8th through July 31 and include ages 5-12 (grades K-5). First Lutheran is wondering if this is something Shepherd of the Valley would also like to do. Shepherd members thought that yes, it would be. First is also going to try to get other churches on board. Diane Burns suggested having people make monetary rather than in-kind donations, as there are very specific needs.

† **next meeting agenda items**:

Diane suggested looking into doing a city-wide interfaith service (like they did back a long time ago at Fisher Chapel) sometime in fall, maybe around Thanksgiving. Perhaps Cheryl Erdmann would be a good leader on this front?

Meeting was closed with all of us standing and reciting the Lord's Prayer together.

Next JOINT COUNCIL meeting: Aug. 18th at 5:30pm at Shepherd of the Valley

Respectfully Submitted,
Susie Smalley

Special meeting for Shepherd of the Valley Council

This quick meeting was held immediately after the joint council meeting. Those present: Pastor Leslie Aska, Phil Smalley, Mary Larsen, LaVon Downing, Kevin Nitz, Brian Carpenter, Don Weise, and Susie Smalley.

Quotes for refinishing the parking lot:

A process that has been in the works since last Fall, Steve Larsen obtained 5 quotes for refinishing the parking lot. We need to have cracks filled, the entire lot sealcoated, and stripes repainted. Since we have an agreement with the mosque that allows their worshippers to use our parking lot every Friday (during which they utilize every bit of it plus...), Steve talked with the representative from the mosque to see if they would be willing to split the cost, or at least provide a good percentage of the cost. They wanted two more quotes and recommended two more companies, so we ended up with 7 quotes total. The quotes ranged from \$10K to \$20K. The low quote had references which Steve checked out, and they seemed acceptable. Since their quote included spraying the coating on, but we want it brushed and squeegeed, they increased their quote by \$588. So it went from \$10,000 to \$10,588.88 - not bad at all). Unfortunately, the mosque is only willing to give \$3K towards the job (they said they have a little financial hardship), but we didn't want to push for more and ruin a good working relationship.

The job includes filling the cracks with sand, then using crack-filler, sealing the lot by rolling or squeegee, and also striping the lot. The company is Suburban Sealcoat (out of Belvidere).

Don motioned to have the church spend \$7588.88 to be used for this reason. Phil seconded.

discussion: Brian asked when it would happen - unsure, but it may need to be done in stages.

LaVon asked where the money would be coming from.

Phil answered it would come from ERTC (Employee Retention Tax Credit) we received

Motion passed unanimously.

Phil made a second motion (in accordance with our constitution) to give Steve the authority to sign the contract; Kevin seconded.

Motion passed unanimously.