Joint Council meeting (in person, at SVLC) – Aug. 18, 2026

Present: Pastor Leslie Aska, Nancy Benjamin, Diane Burns, Brian Carpenter, Carolyn Ciaccio, LaVon Downing (via Zoom), Dan Krueger (1st president), Mary Larsen (SVLC president), Denise Nesmith, Kevin Nitz, Shelley Pierson, Dale Samuelson (1st treasurer), Terry Sittman, Phil Smalley (SVLC treasurer), Susie Smalley (SVLC secretary), and Don Wiese

Pr. Leslie opened the meeting by leading us in prayer relating to the upcoming Season of Creation.

Old Business:

† **Presidents' updates:**

- Shepherd of the Valley:
  - updating our sign (corner of Mulford & Harrison)
  - visitor welcome bags
  - trying to improve bulletins
  - church picnic (Sept. 27th)
  - updating our fire alarm system
- First Lutheran:
  - looking forward to joint worship with pet blessing at First & picnic at Shepherd
  - updated contract with their musician
  - concerned about low attendance (summer)
  - have a couple upcoming retirements (Dan Krueger & their sexton, Mike)
  - pet blessing
    - Diane Burns has been disseminating flyers to several vet clinics, pet stores, and feed stores about the upcoming pet blessing
    - Mary asked if there will be a collection for Noah's Ark Animal Shelter (yes) and suggested we put that in our announcements as well
- both churches celebrated Pastor Leslie's one-year-anniversary

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

† **pastor workload report:**

- regular and steady: ~42 hrs. per week; time split between the two congregations: 45%(1st)/55%(SVLC)
- new rotation for homebound visitation at SVLC is going well
- still are many admin. tasks that haven't been addressed due to time constraints
- Joys: having a baptism, the ice cream social, backpack buddies ministry, worship leaders, treasurers working together as stewards

† **outreach:** Don asked about what the plan is for "outreach" (what we can do to reach out to the community to hopefully attract new people). He mentioned that, in the past, people would go door to door.

- polling place – Pastor Leslie said this may be a good opportunity
  - brochures available (she & Susie are working on it)
  - Pastor Leslie talked with many people during the last election day and is planning on doing that in the future as well
- personal invitation – just simply asking/inviting people
  - Mary pointed out that going door to door may have more of a negative impact nowadays
- website: Terry pointed out that our website had a lot to do with he and Sandy coming to SVLC the first time. Especially in this day and age, it is quite important. Diane agreed and said it's important to be very clear and descriptive.

- food: Diane spoke of "doing food things" *consistently* (spaghetti suppers every Wednesday, for instance). Also, partnering with someone (Carpenter's Place, food pantry, etc.) who is doing something good for the community might be a good thing. Dan mentioned that food and music are an attraction; perhaps we could get a food truck to come in.

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

- First Lutheran:
  - July was a tough month – attendance was down
  - on pace to meet their budget (which shows a deficit at the end of the year)
- Shepherd of the Valley:
  - July was not great for them either!
  - Have been blessed that people have given their full amount at the beginning of the year
  - Our business insurance went *down* by ~$400/month!
    - they re-evaluated our church (lowered its overall (building & property) value)
    - agent submitted a special form [after the meeting, Phil looked it up and it's called an IRPM: Individual Risk Premium Modification]. Our agent submits these forms regularly; ours was the first client of his to ever get one! (saved ~$1K)
    - no claims – that may be a factor
    - a building inspector came out and said that one of the biggest losses for churches is that pipes break, so he recommended getting water leak detectors. So, being proactive, we installed them. This may have helped lower our premium as well.

† **<u>worship attendance</u>:** Bethlehem Lutheran will be closing for good – now would be a great time to invite those members to our churches.

Average attendance for each church: 30 @ First; 40 @ Shepherd
attendance for joint services has been as follows:

date (location)	in person	online
May 3, 2026 (SVLC)	87 (68 SVLC; 19 First)	3
June 28, 2026 (First)	?? (~18 SVLC; ?? First)	?
July 26, 2026 (SVLC)	49 (39 SVLC; 10 First)	3

† **<u>upcoming summer 2026 ministry calendar</u>:**

- Aug. 30, 2026 (@ First Lutheran) – outdoor service with pet blessing (weather permitting)
- Sept. 27, 2026 (@ Shepherd of the Valley) – church picnic
  - SVLC will provide all the food
  - title: "The Endless Church Picnic Table"
- Sept. 28-30, 2026 – Pastor Leslie will be gone for Synod's Professional Leaders Conference at Lutherdale
- Friday, Oct. 2, 2026 – trivia night at Trinity Lutheran
- Saturday, Oct. 3, 2026 – ecumenical benefit brunch
  - this year, it will benefit Nik's Wish
  - this is a partnership between the ELCA & the Catholic Diocese, started in the early 90's (when they were working together seeking common ground (JDDJ)), and is the only event that still is happening that resulted from that partnership.
- Oct. 25, 2026 (Reformation Sunday) – joint worship at First Lutheran

New Business:

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

- **feedback from joint services:** Dan mentioned that one member of First had a difficult time hearing our service here. At First Lutheran, they have devices to aid hearing. Phil said it's on his task list. We have very old ones; he will investigate getting something and is trying to find something that can connect via Bluetooth. Dan mentioned that some bars have little portable speakers, which gave Phil an idea.
- **other shared future outreach opportunities that Shepherd and First could do together:**
    - Dan mentioned volunteering - perhaps serving breakfasts/lunches at Carpenter's Place
        - Mary asked if they call when they need someone; Diane said they post their calendar of dates needed on Facebook and their website. September has many openings; basically, the whole month.
        - Carpenter's Place is buying Emmanuel Lutheran and will be moving there soon. Emmanuel is renting back from them.
    - Ruthie's Kitchen
- **supply pastor rate:** Synod's base rate for supply pastors is $200 + milage and $50 for each additional service. Pastor suggested that we have a consistent rate based on the fact that our churches are just under 7 miles apart, and figuring based on them traveling no more than 30 miles, this would equal $280. The churches would then split it, so each church would be $140. Phil said they could easily figure out mileage with each supply pastor and suggested they simply figure out the mileage for each leg. He then made the following motion:
    - If we need a supply pastor on a *regular* Sunday (when the pastor must go to and preach at **both** churches), that we pay them $250 + mileage from their home to Shepherd, from Shepherd to First, then from First to their home. That total would then be split equally between First and Shepherd.
    - If we need a supply pastor on a *combined service* Sunday (when the pastor only will need to go to **one** of the churches), that we pay them $200 + mileage to whichever church is hosting that Sunday's service, then split that evenly between First and Shepherd.
    - ….Kevin seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

† **our flag:** Don noticed that the flag was missing. He investigated further and found it lying on the ground: the hook broke. Don will take care of it by calling Nick from the Veteran's group and they will bring their bucket truck to repair it.

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

Next JOINT COUNCIL meeting: Nov. 17th at 5:30pm at First Lutheran

Next SVLC meeting: Sept. 15th at 4pm in Shepherd Hall

Respectfully Submitted,
Susie Smalley