

ST. MARK’S LUTHERAN CHURCH
CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING DOCKET
March 21, 2024

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Attendance Record

Date: March 21, 2024	Location: St. Mark's Church
Time Started: 19:07	Time Ended: 20:54

Invited	Jan 25	Feb 29	Mar 21									
Nathan Cook	P	P	P									
Signe Jewett (C)	P	P	P									
Lynda Joyal (T)	E	E	P									
Tom Lewis	P	P	P									
Jodi Pappel-Reider	P	E	P									
Cole Parsons (VC)	P	P	P									
Inga Skundberg (S)	P	P	P									
Kris Wegert	P	E	P									
Pastor Zsófi (exofficio)	P	P	P									
VACANT												
Guests												

Meeting Minutes

- 1) Opening Devotions

- 2) Approval of Agenda
MSC CC-2024-14 That the Agenda be approved.

- 3) Approval of Minutes
MSC CC-2024-15 That the Minutes of Council Meeting dated February 29, 2024 be approved.

- 4) Finance
Inasmuch as Finance Committee has not met in the past month, a verbal report was provided and included an overview of the following: actual insurance costs (with a \$2500 deductible) were approximately \$3000 lower than budgeted; the 2023 budgeted deficit of \$38,000 was \$15,000 less than expected; general offerings received were unchanged in 2023 from 2022, 20% of which is typically received in December every year; personnel costs account for approximately 57% of all expenses; and, unfortunately, reduced remittances to mission partners including that to Synod was \$10,000 less from 2022 and decreased to \$30,000 in 2023. Concerns were expressed how decreased financial support to Synod can negatively impact its current staffing levels and ultimately its mission and programming/services that it provides.

MSC CC-2024-16 That Lynda Joyal be authorized to sign the 2023 Charitable Return.

Lynda Joyal declared a conflict of interest and abstained from discussion and voting on the matter.

- 5) Continuing Business
 - a) Sponsorship Request for Syrian ReFugee Family - Laid over to April 25, 2024 Council Meeting.
 - b) MNO Synod Convention

MSC CC-2024-17 That Cole Parsons be approved to represent St. Mark's at the 2024 MNO Synod Convention.

Cole Parsons declared a conflict of interest and abstained from discussion and voting on the matter.

- 6) Reports
 - a) Chair - A verbal report recognized and thanked newer Council Members for their first year on Council.
 - b) Pastor - Reviewed

Deliberation of the report included discussion of the following: although 2023 has been a growth year for new members, average weekly attendance has decreased; an acknowledgement has been received from the Sunday School Coordinator that their last day will be May 19, 2024; concern about how decreasing membership, volunteerism and finances affects programming, and the resulting detriment to children's ministry which typically marks a decline of the church itself; and, the resulting Easter message to take away and encourage is to invite someone to church.

7) Committee Reports

- a) Nominations - A verbal report advised that of the four upcoming vacancies on Council, two people so far have agreed to let their name stand for nomination to Council, and that Ed Mann has once again agreed to be nominated to represent St. Mark's at the Lutheran Urban Ministry Annual General Meeting.

8) New Business

- a) AGM Preparation and Agenda

MSC CC-2024-18 That the Agenda for the April 21, 2024 AGM be approved.

- b) Lawn Service Renewal

MSC CC-2024-19 That the Contract for Da Boy Next Door Lawn Service be approved for the 2024-2025 Season.

- c) Upcoming Dates to Note:

April 25, 2024 Council Meeting

April 28, 2024 Council Installation

May 2024 - Synod Workshop for Council Members (ZOOM)

- d) In Camera

Adjournment

Refugee Sponsorship Request

Request to St Mark's Lutheran Church Council

February 1, 2024

I write to request St Mark's Council endorsement of and support for a private refugee sponsorship project.

Back in 2016, St Mark's cooperated with Bethel Mennonite to support and settle Syrian refugees Hammoud and Hanaa Jumaa and their young son. I am happy to report they are doing well and their family has expanded to four children.

At the same time as Hammoud and Hanaa arrived, the Al Khattab family came to Canada, sponsored by CLWR, the ELCIC and LCC. They too have thrived in Canada with Ahmad being fully employed and Khadija involved in volunteer work at their children's school. They have 3 sons. Ahmad's parents, uncles and siblings have also resettled in Canada. Khadija's mother and sister arrived in October 2023 and another sister's family has been here nearly a year. I am grateful to call the family friends and I enjoy regular visits with them as an honorary 'aunt' to the kids.

When Khadija's mother and sister arrived, they left behind her brother Abdulaziz Magribi and his wife and two children. All of them had been interviewed by UNHCR as resettlement possibilities but the Magribi family was deemed not to have met the criteria for coming to Canada, probably because the wife was only 17 at the time. She is now of age. The family is living in a refugee camp in Konya, Turkey where they had to relocate after the earthquake in Turkey near the Syrian border in 2023. They are now living in substandard housing with a canvas roof, there is a shortage of food and the Turkish government will not permit Syrian refugees to work.

I had lunch with Khadija, her mother and sisters in January. Although I speak no Arabic, the distress suffered by the mother in particular was very evident. Abdulaziz is her youngest child and she is very worried about him and her grandchildren. In Arabic, she implored me to do what I can to help.

I called CLWR's refugee settlement office and they were very helpful. They recall the Al Khattab family sponsorship and so are happy to help again. In order to privately sponsor the family, a congregation or a cluster of congregations would need to commit to a year's worth of support, both financial and in kind, much as we did with Hammoud and Hanaa (connecting with English classes, health and dental care, finding accommodation etc). The amount suggested by the Canadian government is about \$25,000 although that would probably be a minimum amount. The good news about this sponsorship possibility is that there is a large and very committed family group here in Winnipeg. They are willing to sign as co-sponsors and to fundraise and provide the settlement support required for the family, thereby reducing the requirement for funds and volunteers. In addition, Rev Paul Gehrs (assistant to the national ELCIC bishop) and his wife Melanie have expressed their commitment to raising the necessary funds.

A private sponsorship such as this takes anywhere from 18 months to 3 years to come to fruition. This would give St Mark's plenty of time to identify other partners in the project and to ensure the funds necessary are in place. It is possible to seek pledges of support that could be collected once the sponsorship is confirmed by the government. As there is still the possibility

that the family may be approved by UNHCR and recommended to the Canadian government for sponsorship, collecting pledges rather than funds would mean the money wouldn't have to be returned if the family was approved to come as government sponsored refugees.

What would be required to move forward on the sponsorship is a commitment from St Mark's (and perhaps a partner or two and the Al Khattab family) to provide support for the first year the family is in Canada. Support is financial and in kind. This would require a signed partnership agreement with CLWR also being a party. The family in Turkey would need to complete the forms, submit them to CLWR (they have an Arabic speaking interlocutor to ensure that they forms are complete before submission) and then wait for the government to process the application. CLWR has advised that we would probably have at least 2 years to raise the required funds.

Because of my friendship with Khadija Al Khattab, I am obviously very committed to taking on the work required to make the sponsorship possible. Along with Rev Paul Gehrs and Melanie, I believe that there are others in the Winnipeg Lutheran community who will also participate. If I can confirm the Council's support in principle, I will begin the process of seeking funding and volunteer pledges when we return in March. I am proposing this sponsorship not as part of the Social Ministry Committee but as an individual member of the congregation. If approved, I will put together a small working group to carry out the necessary steps.

I am providing the following motions for the Council's deliberation:

As a co-signer with the Al Khattab family, that St Mark's Lutheran Church Winnipeg commits to a private refugee sponsorship of Syrian refugee Abdulaziz Magribi and his family.

That the St Mark's Council endorses a campaign seeking funding and volunteer pledges for the sponsorship of Syrian refugee Abdulaziz Magribi and family.

Thank you very much for considering my request.

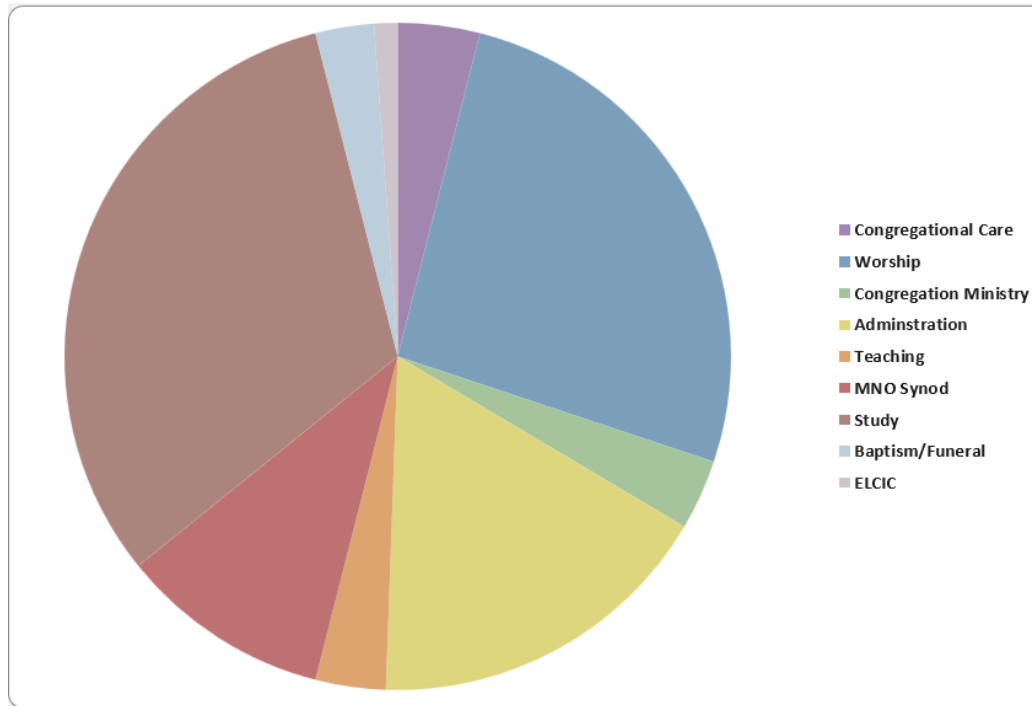
Respectfully submitted,

Rhonda Lorch

Pastor's Report – February 2024 Rev. Zsófi Schmiedge

TLDR; [Too Long Didn't Read] version: While January may have felt like it was going on forever and ever, the last couple of weeks have travelled at lightning pace and the to-do's have piled up. There are many balls in the air, and I find, like every other person, I am having to discern which ones are bouncy and can be dropped for the moment while I deal with the ones that can't. I give thanks to God for the life and vibrancy of a busy congregation, and I pray for guidance to remember what is mine to deal with and what is not.

FEBRUARY



Where've We Been

Ministries of St Marks – The focus of this season has been Lent and Lenten Worship. I have been encouraged by our Shared ministry with Messiah and look forward to other ways in which the people of St Marks can venture into shared ministry experiences in all facets of congregational life and ministry. It is SO good when we can gather and celebrate a larger diversity – the depth and breadth of who we are as God's beloved people.

Office Management & Staff – Brian has removed himself as a Facebook editor from our Facebook page. Tax Receipts have been mailed out. Parochial Report has been submitted.

Pastoral Care – The funeral and memorial celebrations for Rudy and Kay Roman have taken up a large portion of time and coordination with the family and the funeral home. I am grateful for the people who come forward to help make these kinds of services happen in meaningful ways – it is a treasured gift of hospitality and care from the people of St Marks to the grieving community and not something that the staff can pull off on their own.

Personally – To-do lists that don't seem to shrink has led to an incredibly full Lent of consistently working 12-hour Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursdays back-to-back for five weeks straight. As you can guess, this has been the cause of a little extra stress at home, but I think we have weathered it well together.

Where We Are

Ministries of St Marks – I am hoping to write an Easter letter for members of the congregation. And I am planning to attend a few committee meetings for year end insights over the next few months, and I have been prayerfully considering what to do in light of the lack of nominees for Council and the reality of limited discipleship and decreasing ministry accompaniment at St Marks. Next year could look very different from what people have become accustomed to at St Marks.

Office Management & Staff – I still need to finalize my reports for authorization from each staff member, and I am decidedly apologetic to them for not having done that work yet. With my approval, John has begun to work Fridays to compensate for the extra workload at this time of year, and to cover off the hours that will be missed while he will be away after Easter. We've also discussed what some summer hours may look like so that he can plan some holiday time with family. Staff are well into planning Holy Week and ensuring all of the different elements and components are in place to curate a worshipful and meaningful time for everyone. John would like to begin work on the filing systems, and we have also discussed moving the church away from the Keep & Share calendar program. I feel it noteworthy to mention an increase in rental bookings – occasional usage seems to be increasing.

Wider Church – I attended the first day of Assembly at the Legislature as a guest member of the Multifaith Forum for River Heights Faith Communities hosted by the riding's MLA. I have also attended a meeting of members for furthering plans on Housing, Daycares, and a Community Nurse Pilot program on March 15th. There are some requests from the group for some information gathering that the new Council will be asked to assist with. Attended the first meeting of the Joint Anglican Lutheran Committee for 2SLGBTQIA+ Education, Social Justice & Policy on March 7th.

Personally – My time and plans were unexpectedly interrupted by some health hiccups – which have taken a week, a doctor's visit, and some prescription changes to resolve, but I am on the mend just in time for the busy time. Plans for some family holiday times are in the early stages, and we are looking at late spring/early summer.

Where We're Going

Ministries of St Marks – Children's Ministry is still on my radar but is significantly lower on my priority list at the moment – not because I don't care about the ministry, but because there are a number of other things that have needed more pressing attention this month. I am keen to have conversations with families about how they want to engage in the ministry of this congregation and where they see the congregation walking alongside their responsibilities and commitments made in their children's baptisms as we align family needs with St Mark's vision and mission. I am planning a training session for new Acolytes – we've had 6 young people come forward from an ask about learning and stepping into roles of leadership!

Office Management & Staff – I have asked Haiden to submit a formal letter to Council stating their intention to end their contractual relationship with St Mark's at the end of May. They will be returning to their home congregation, and we will wish them well with utmost love and care on May 19th. There are plans for a wrap-up party for the program year of Children and Youth Ministry that Sunday, as the following Sunday is Synod Convention weekend, and Haiden and I will not be at St Marks. There will still be Sunday School on the 26th, however.

Wider Church – Queer Evensong is at the end of April; The Asencion Festival in early May; Synod Convention in late May, A Cambridge Coffeehouse in early June as a Pride season benefit; the MNO/Diocesan Study Conference is mid-June; and the National Worship Conference is in mid-July,

Personally – I would like to express my thanks to Signe, Inga, and Kris for their work on Council. I have appreciated their insights, expertise, and engagement and I will miss having them all on Council. I have been especially grateful for Signe and the relationship we have developed together as we have found our paths for our positions. The first Council chairperson who starts with you in a congregation is a core memory person and I couldn't have asked for a lovelier chairperson!

I am preparing my AGM report. It's not been an easy report to write. This year I am looking to spend more time in my report looking forward than backward, as my monthly reports to council are available as snapshots of the year that has been. I believe that we would benefit from spending some time acknowledging all that we are capable of, all that we are doing currently, and admitting that while it often doesn't feel like it's enough for many of us: there aren't enough people, there isn't enough money, and there doesn't seem to be enough time to do all of the things we so wish we could be doing. *One of those things needs to change.* As an entire congregation we need to commit to either: accepting where we are and begin to pare down what have been doing so that we can sustain ourselves, or we need to commit as an entire congregation – more people in capacity, money, and time.

STATISTICS HR Reporting

SYNOD GUIDELINES		CURRENT PERIOD (Guidelines)	YEAR TO DATE (Guidelines)
Days of the Year	366	29	60
Workdays (5-day work week)	251	15 (20)	34 (42)
Days Off	104	07 (08)	15 (16)
Statutory Holidays	011	10 (01)	02 (02)
Vacation Days (includes days off + 2 rollover)	030	--	03
Study Days (includes days off)	014	05	05
Sick Leave	018	01	01

Congregational Reporting

Baptism – n/a

Death – n/a

Reception by Transfer.

Confirmation/Affirmation – n/a

Removal by Transfer - 4 (3) *NON-MEMBER

ODASCHUK, Patrica Anne [March 7, 2024]

ODASCHUK, Larry* [March 7, 2024]

ODASCHUK, Carol Anne* [March 7, 2024]

ODASCHUK, Kirsten Erica [March 7, 2024]

ODASCHUK, Leslie Pauline [March 7, 2024]

ODASCHUK, Matthew* [March 7, 2024]

ODASCHUK, Scott (Joshua) [March 7, 2024]

Pastoral Acts(year to date)

Baptisms	00	Confirmations	00
Weddings	00	Funerals	00

Congregation Activities (year to date)

Worship Services	06 (10)	Communion Services	07 (07)
Baptismal Counselling	-- (--)	Wedding Counselling	-- (--)
Visitation/Family Prayer	05 (08)	Council Meetings	01 (02)
Meetings	01 (05)	"Home" Communion	01 (02)
Confirmation Classes	03 (07)	Other Events	02 (03)
Hospital Visits	03 (03)	Staff Meetings	03 (04)

Wider Church Responsibilities (year to date)

MNO Meetings/Events	02 (04)	Mentorship & Collegiality	02 (04)
Other Meetings/Events	01 (03)	MNO Synod Leadership Conference	--

February 17, 2024

TO:
St. Mark's Lutheran Church
600 Cambridge St
Winnipeg MB R3M 3G9

Dear Brian,

It has been our pleasure to serve you as your dedicated lawn-care and snow-clearing provider, and we sincerely appreciate the trust you have placed in our services. Your satisfaction is our top priority, and we are committed to maintaining the high standards that you have come to expect from us.

In line with our commitment to providing exceptional service, we would like to inform you of an adjustment to our service rates for the 2024 - 2025 season.

New rate for 2024-2025 Lawncare services and Snow Clearing services

Spring Clean-up	\$300.00 (billed after service)
Fall Clean up	\$300.00 (billed after service)
Snow clearing	\$160.00 per month (Nov-Mar, billed monthly)
On-call snow clearing	\$50.00 (billed after service)

The rates above exclude GST.

We truly value your business and the relationship we have built over the years. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the new rate or if there is anything specific you would like to discuss, please feel free to reach out to us at robert@daboypropertycare.ca

Once again, thank you for choosing us as your lawn-care and snow-clearing provider. We look forward to another year of enhancing the beauty of your outdoor space and exceeding your expectations.

Regards,


Robert Van Lieshout