

**ST. MARK’S LUTHERAN CHURCH
CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING
February 27, 2025**

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Pastor’s Report
Letter of Invitation

Attendance

Date: February 27, 2025	Location: St. Mark's Church
Time Started: 19:20	Time Ended: 20:32

Invited	Jan 25	Feb 29	Mar 21	Apr 25	May 30	June 20	Sep 12	Oct 24	Nov 21	Nov 27	Jan 23	Feb 27
Nathan Cook (S)	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	E	A	P	P	P
Lynda Joyal (T)	E	E	P	E	E	P	P	P	E	E	P	A
Nels Kristenson	-	-	-	P	P	E	E	E	P	P	P	P
Tom Lewis	P	P	P	E	E	E	P	E	P	P	P	P
Jodi Pappel	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P
Cole Parsons (VC)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Marijus Timmerman (C)	-	-	-	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P
Pastor Zsófi (exofficio)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
VACANT												
VACANT												
	Guests											
Signe Jewett				P								
Brian Lorch									P	P		

Minutes

1. Opening Devotion

2. Approval of Agenda

MSC CC-2025-03 - That the Agenda for February 27, 2025 be approved.

3. Approval of Minutes

MSC CC-2025-04 - That the Minutes of the Council Meeting dated January 23, 2025 be approved.

4. Business Arising from minutes

- Town Hall, March 9, 2025

5. Finance

- Report in Folder

- Leisle Bequest

MSC CC-2025-05 - That the David Liesle Bequest of \$5000 be placed in the Memorial Fund.

- Office Hours during Christmas and New Year

6. Reports

a) Chair

b) Pastor

7. Committee Reports

- RAP

8. New Business

- a) Re-appoint Financial Secretary

MSC CC-2025-06 - That Verle-Ann Irvine be re-appointed Financial Secretary.

b) Office Administrator Agreement

MSC CC-2025-07 - That we adopt the employee benefits administration agreement for the position of office administrator as presented on February 27, 2025.

Adjournment

Meeting Dates for 2024-25: Town Hall March 9, March 27, April 6 AGM

Council Chair Report

For February 27, 2025

Submitted by Marijus Timmerman

January 28 to February 24, 2025 date:

Thank you to Cole Parsons and the rest of Council for your work in my absence.

- Cole and I met with the Council Chair of Messiah, the Pastors of Messiah and St. Mark's to discuss the proposed Office Administrative agreement.

- Re-drafted the Office Administrative Agreement and distributed it to the stakeholders at each church.

- Debriefed with Cole regarding activities during my absence.

- Met with Pastor Zsofi (by phone) to discuss plans and issues such as a Town hall meeting, process for an annual review, PAD issue and office closure protocol as well as other matters.

- Was in touch with Finance chair regarding financial matters.

- Communicated with Lynda and Nathan regarding their council seats.

- Began communication with Nominations Committee in preparation for filling vacant council seats.

- Arranged for an e-vote regarding a facility rental opportunity.

- Responded to request for Insurance renewal.

- With Pastor Zsofi began preparing questions for the Town Hall Meeting.

- Began preparing the process for the Pastor's Review.

Financial Update to Council

February 10, 2025

Submitted by: Brian Lorch, Finance Committee Chair

The Finance Committee will not meet again before the February council meeting. In lieu of meeting notes, the following update is provided.

2024 Income Tax Receipts

The Treasurer and Finance Chair met on January 20 to review charitable giving totals reported in ChurchWatch (donation record keeping software) and QuickBooks (accounting software). Some minor variance was noted in the totals. Subsequently, the Finance Chair worked with the Financial Secretary to resolve most of the variances reducing the difference between the two totals to an immaterial amount.

Tax receipts were generated and a cover letter was written. The Finance Secretary and Finance Chair assembled these documents for distribution to members. Sixty-six receipts were flagged as going to individuals not expected to be in church anytime soon. These receipts have been mailed. The balance of the receipts were placed in the Parish Hall on Sunday, February 9. They will be available for pickup until Sunday, February 23. After that date, unclaimed receipts will be mailed with the Financial Secretary assuming responsibility for ensuring that happens.

2024 Financial Year End

Preliminary analysis shows 2024 ended with an operating surplus of \$911. This is a much better outcome than what was presented at the congregational budget meeting in December. Total income for 2024 was an almost identical match to what was predicted. Total spending was much less. Notable spending that did not occur was \$1,100 for snow plowing in November and December and deferral of pension and health plan benefit costs owed to the Office Administrator (\$1,700). Number of hours submitted by the Youth Leader were also less than what was projected and general property maintenance came in under budget (no costly HVAC failures in 2024).

The deferred benefit costs will become an unbudgeted expense item in 2025. As per the council motion passed at its November meeting, the Finance Committee authorized remittances to the MNO Synod and LUM to the full amount of what was budgeted for in 2024 (\$21,000 to MNO, \$1,000 to LUM).

Bequest

In January, the congregation received an unrestricted bequest of \$5,000 from the estate of David Leisle. For the time being, the bequest has been recorded as a general offering. I have asked the council chair to consult with the council as to whether this bequest should remain a general offering or whether it should be

allocated to a designated fund. Suggestions would include the Memorial Fund or the Capital Works fund.

January 2025 Financials

- General offerings in January totaled \$21,996, an increase of \$2,071 compared to the same month last year.
- Without the bequest, general offerings would have declined by about \$3,000.
- Operating surplus in January: \$1,868
- Deferred expenditures: \$1750 to MNO Synod; \$83 to Lutheran Urban Mission.

January PAD Processing

January general offering income was negatively affected by the omission of PAD giving from January 27. Here's what happened.

- PAD is normally processed within a few days of the end of a month but because of the office closure over Christmas, the January PADS were communicated to the bank on December 23.
- The bank does not accept PAD directives more than 30 days in advance. Hence, it would not accept a PAD directive for January 27 on December 23.
- Office Admin left a written note for the Financial Secretary about the rejected PAD. Two things went wrong (1) Financial Secretary was out of the country for much of January and never saw the note. (2) Financial Secretary has nothing to do with submitting PAD directives to the bank.
- Result was a loss of \$760 in general offering income.

When the missing PAD offering was discovered, I asked the Pastor to investigate. Pastor has spoken with the Office Administrator and clarified that the proper communication channel for PAD troubleshooting should be notifying either the Finance Chair or the Treasurer.

As Finance Chair, I have asked the Council Chair to review policy around closing the church office between Christmas and New Year's Day.

Documentation for Audit Committee

Documents requested by the Audit Committee have been assembled and uploaded to G Drive.

Capital Works Projects

A request has been made to the Property Committee to prepare rough estimates of capital projects likely to be undertaken in the next five to ten years. These would include replacement of the sanctuary carpet, replacement of shingles on the parish hall and sanctuary roofs as well as a reserve fund to cover HVAC system repairs.

Town Hall Planning Report

Town Hall – March 9, 2025

Timing: 1-2 hours

The Plan

- Have tables, chairs, materials, and snacks ready to meet in the Church Hall shortly after service.
- Introduction to the process – probably Chair/Pastor? (will also circulate during discussion time).
 - Introduce purpose and process.
 - Have a council member at each table to moderate and record discussion points and to report to the whole group following discussions.
 - Debrief post discussion
 - Briefly indicate intended next steps.

The potential questions

1. In what ways has the community around us changed?
2. Do you believe God is calling us/you to something specific?
3. In your life at this church, what has been most meaningful to you?
4. a. What are the most effective parts of the congregation's ministries?
b. What are the least effective parts of the congregation's ministries?
5. What is your greatest hope/desire for this church?

Next Steps

How will the information guide our actions as council? Who will be responsible for collating the information and reporting to council and congregation?

Other questions considered:

- If you had to imagine what this church would look like five years from now, what would it look like? What changed?
- Two/Three/Five Years From Now, What Will We Wish We Had Done?
- Share a time you experienced **belonging** to God or received **hope** from God through St Marks. What gets you most excited about St Marks?

- What are this congregation's dreams for knowing God? List three specific ways in which you would like people of all ages in this congregation, as well as visitors, to know God and God's story more fully.
- Identify barriers that can prevent people in your congregation and visitors from recognizing that they have been called and equipped to work in God's kingdom.
- What are this congregation's dreams for people to respond to the ways God is calling and equipping them? List three specific ways in which you would like people of all ages in this congregation to recognize that they have been called and equipped.
- If we had to function without our lead pastor for a full year, starting tomorrow, in what ways would our church change (or not)? Would it survive? Why or why not?
- Has there been anything in the life of the church that has caused you stress or discomfort? What?
- How might the church better accomplish this mission?

Employee Benefits Administration Agreement -DRAFT

THIS AGREEMENT made as of the day of _____, 2025 .

BETWEEN:

Messiah Lutheran Church

(herein called “Messiah”)

OF THE FIRST PART,

- And –

St. Mark’s Lutheran Church

(herein called “St. Mark's”)

OF THE SECOND PART,

- regarding –

Alison Norberg

(herein called the “Employee”)

WHEREAS Messiah hired the Employee in 2021 on a part-time basis as an office administrator for its congregation;

AND WHEREAS St. Mark's independently hired the Employee on a part-time basis in July of 2024 as an office administrator for its congregation;

AND WHEREAS Messiah and St. Mark's (collectively the “Employers”) each have agreements with ELCIC Group Services Inc. (“GSI”) obligating the Employers to enrol their employees in pension and benefits plans once an employee becomes eligible;

AND WHEREAS the Employee became eligible for pension and benefits on the date of being hired by Messiah, requiring Messiah to submit applicable documents, premiums and fees to GSI;

AND WHEREAS GSI has informed St. Mark's that:

- (i) St. Mark's is required to contribute to the Employee's pension and benefits based on her cumulative salary with the Employers; and that
- (ii) GSI only accepts premiums for an employee from one employer,

NOW THEREFORE THIS AGREEMENT WITNESSES that in consideration of the premises hereof and of the mutual covenants and agreements hereinafter contained, the Employers agree as follows:

ARTICLE I - INDEPENDENT EMPLOYMENT

1.01 The Employers acknowledge and agree that the Employee is independently employed by each Employer according to the terms and conditions of their respective employment contracts with the Employee. However, the Employers agree to cooperate in determining the days of the week that the Employee will be present at their respective offices."

1.02. Each Employer shall independently pay the Employee her wages or salary. For administrative efficiency, St. Mark's shall pay the Employee's hourly wages through a scheduled remittance to Messiah in accordance with section 3.04 of this Agreement and in turn Messiah shall pay the Employee on behalf of St. Mark's.

1.03 In order to comply with GSI's administrative requirements, the Employers agree to the pension and benefits arrangements outlined in Article III.

ARTICLE II - TERM OF AGREEMENT

2.01 This agreement shall commence on the date signed by both of the parties and shall terminate upon the earlier of: (a) the date that the Employee is no longer employed by one of the Employers; or (b) the date that the Employee is no longer eligible for pension and benefits; or (c) the date that GSI terminates its requirement for only one employer to pay premiums to GSI in respect of an employee who has more than one employer or (d) the date of termination under Article IV.

2.02 In the event that one of the Employers terminates the employment of the Employee or reduces her salary or wages so as to make the Employee ineligible or in the event that the Employee resigns her position with one of the Employers, written notice via email to the council chair shall be given to the other Employer as soon as reasonably practicable.

ARTICLE III - SHARING OF PENSION AND BENEFITS COSTS

3.01 Messiah is responsible for submitting all documents and payments relating to the Employee's pension and benefits, as required by GSI, on behalf of the Employers.

3.02 Premiums and fees for pension and benefits for the Employee that are payable to GSI and CRA from both Employers (Shared Costs) will be shared by the Employers according to the following methodology:

3.02.01 Premiums and fees included in the shared costs that are based on a percentage of wages/salary earned shall be apportioned to each Employer according to each Employer's percentage share of the Employee's combined wages/salary earned. These would include Employer contributions to CPP, EI, ELCIC pension and Life Plus program.

3.02.02 Premiums and fees included in the Shared Costs that are fixed, regardless of income earned, shall be apportioned to each Employer based on their respective percentage shares of total hours worked by the Employee for each Employer. This would include Health Module premiums payable to GSI.

3.03 Messiah shall invoice St. Mark's each month for St. Mark's share of the Shared Costs as calculated in accordance with section 3.02 using the procedure outlined in section 3.04 of this Agreement. Messiah shall also issue an invoice to St. Mark's for arrears in Shared Costs owing to GSI from the date of St. Mark's

hiring of the Employee to the date of the first monthly invoice under this Agreement. Arrears shall be calculated using the same methodology specified in section 3.02.

3.04 No later than November 30 of each year, the Employers shall submit to each other the salary/wages expected to be earned by the Employee for the coming calendar year. No later than December 15 of each year, a representative of each Employer shall meet and, using the methods described in Section 3.02, determine the average monthly wages and benefits ("Total Compensation") for the Employee's time at St. Mark's for the coming year. Messiah shall then invoice St. Mark's monthly for its' share of the Employee's Total Compensation. Invoices for the following month shall be issued no later than seven business days prior to the start of that month.

3.05 Invoices shall be due and payable by the first business day of the month excluding government recognized holidays.

3.06 St. Mark's shall submit to Messiah in a timely manner the information regarding the Employee required by GSI for the pension and benefits plans.

3.07. Messiah shall submit invoices to the attention of St. Mark's Treasurer and St. Mark's shall submit documentation and information required by section 3.04 to the attention of Messiah's Treasurer.

3.08 Prior to the end of the calendar year, the Employers shall determine what, if any, adjustments are to be made in the amount owed or owing to St. Mark's due to variances between the expected and actual number of hours worked by the Employee at St. Mark's.

ARTICLE IV – CONFIDENTIALITY

4.01 The Employers agree to keep all information shared with each other regarding the Employee confidential. Such information shall not be disclosed to a third party without the written consent of the Employee and the Employer from whom the information was received, except as required by the laws of Manitoba or Canada.

ARTICLE V - MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

5.01 Any changes to this agreement will be communicated to at least one of the following in a timely fashion: Office managers, Treasurers, Council Chairs.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have duly executed this Agreement as of the day and year first above written.

Chair of Church Council of Messiah

Vice-Chair of Church Council of Messiah

(Print name)

(Print name)

(Signature)

(Signature)

(Date)

(Date)

Chair of Church Council of St. Mark's

(Print name)

(Signature)

(Date)

Vice-Chair of Church Council of St. Mark's

(Print name)

(Signature)

(Date)

A world where Christ's unconditional love is felt by all of creation.

What was the most spiritually enriching this past month and why?

I have been most uplifted by the stories that people have shared with me since I asked for them. I am renewed by the number of people who have stopped to tell me: how meaningful worship has been for them, how the sermon has struck a note with them, how lucky they feel to be at St Marks at this time, and for all the ways that this congregation is supporting so many and making meaning and place for people. The past couple of weeks, there have been a couple of particularly poignant interactions that have been affirming of my call to be the pastor in this place and time, and I am grateful for the continued support and prayers. I have been lucky enough to have several 1:1 visits and a handful more lined up to be scheduled.

What was most difficult this month that needs prayer and Council's input?

Looking back on previous reports, I can say that since my last report I am increasingly aware of how my personal drive and passion to try other things and experiment with changed ways of being church comes up against a call and need to sit, listen, and hold space for people who are grieving a vision of church that is no longer sustainable. This is not new news to you all, but it is a growing awareness of the realities for St Mark's future pushing up against the realities of several other ELCIC congregations in this city.

When I hear reports from colleagues about Sunday services attended by 15-25 people, few to no children, and deficit budgets multiple times our own, I wonder if the people of St Mark's know how truly lucky, they, WE, really are? Even amid their own anxieties? Or, how we are to move into a vibrant ministry with integrity for the community around us as we continue to worry about our bottom lines. Or, how we name that our deficit isn't an income problem, but a giving problem, without shaming the people who are already giving the most they can.

These are the questions that keep me up in prayer at night. That keep me pushing the limits of my capacity to do for and with.

How is my spiritual relationship, my relationship with the congregation, & my relationship with my family?

I honestly feel that things, the world considered, are in some calmer waters. My family is well, well enough as can be expected of all at their appropriate stages of life. I have recovered well from my surgery in January and now have two very bright pink scars that make my skin a little more interesting.

Paul and I are planning a stay-cation for our 10th Wedding Anniversary at the end of March. I will not be in church on March 30th and will be looking for supply that Sunday. We're hoping the weather holds and in-laws will be present to attend to Perrin while we live the lofty hotel life. More importantly, this will be meaningful connection time for us that we haven't really had since Perrin was born.

We've Been, We Are, and We're Going On

Generosity - *"We value the abundant sharing of our love, time and talents."*

- I continue to remind folks at St Marks that though we have a lot to celebrate and be thankful for in the life and vibrancy of ministry, we are balancing on a delicate edge of

capacity. There are places where there is no more gas in the tank and a few more hands simply don't exist. I am pondering where we can adjust, what we may need to let go of, or where we really need to get people to focus in and commit.

- I am attempting a better modeling of my time management and capacity limitations for staff and the congregation. I have found a pretty good routine of weekly tasks and activities and have been slowly reintegrating practices that I have been missing. I look forward to being able to teach an Adult Education class in the very near future.

Inclusiveness - *"We believe that differences enrich our community and our common ground is our loving Creator. We are called to love and support each other following Christ's example. All people, including people of all sexual orientation, gender identities, race, beliefs, faiths and abilities are welcome to be who they are in this community."*

- The ministers at St Andrews and Westworth United have asked if we would be interested in sharing a queer worship service together during pride month. I think this is a lovely opportunity to expand the understanding of both the "Affirming" and "RIC" designations of our churches. It may be that there would be other Christian denominations in the River Heights Neighbourhood that would also like to participate. The ministers and I feel that this could become a rotating thing that happens more seasonally, and I would welcome and expansion of that nature.

Nurturing - *"We value the relationships we have in our community by nurturing and supporting each other in times of struggle, respecting differences of opinion, and dealing with conflicts in an open manner."*

- I have been accepted to a 12-week certificate program at Princeton called "Iron Sharpening Iron". It is a leadership program for a chosen group of church leaders to do together intentionally. It will begin in April, just after Easter. The cohort that I am a part of will meet exclusively online once a week on a schedule that is explained in the letter I've attached to this report for Council. I will be applying for an advanced study grant through the Continuing Education Program in the ELCIC and using my ConEd funds for whatever costs are not covered by the grant. I do not expect this additional work to take away from my time with St Marks and consider its increase in my knowledge and expertise of value to the congregation and ministry of the church and synod.

Justice - *"We value working towards peace and justice in the world around us through collaboration with other organizations and faith groups."*

- City-wide confirmation has been a real gift this winter. The number of young people and watching them engage with each other is motivating and fulfilling. We're hoping to plan a city-wide wrap up party in the spring as well as a couple of field trips outside of our term classes.
- I have been grateful for the opportunity to meet with the RH Faith Forum quarterly. Our MLA is always keen for us to share with each other the goings on and the concerns of our faith communities. I have learned a lot about the synagogues in the area and of the changes coming to some of the long-term care facilities around. Additionally, I was asked if I knew anything about the "Four Corners BBQ event" – an ecumenical neighbourhood BBQ hosted by four different faith communities that reside on important corners in River Heights. All to say there is renewed interest in having something like that again.

Congregational Reporting

Baptism – n/a

Reception by Transfer,

Confirmation/Affirmation – 03

2024-11-24 SANDERS, Lee & Lois

2025-02-09 KARPA, Jane

Death – 03 *denotes non-member***

2025-01-04 LEISLE, David

2025-01-07 TYMM, Bruno **

2025-01-19 HASSE, Erna **

Removal by Request - n/a

Pastoral Acts - year to date

Baptisms 00 Affirmation 01 Weddings 00 Funerals 00

Vocational Activities - year to date

Worship Services: 07 of which 07 were Communion Services

Baptismal Preparation: --

Wedding Preparation: --

Funeral Preparation: --

Visitation/Family Prayer: 04

“Home” Communion: 02

1:1 Pastoral Response: 07

Hospital Visits: 01

Meetings: 05

Council Meetings: 01

Staff Meetings: 02

Confirmation Classes: 05

Adult Education: --

Wider Church Responsibilities (year to date)

MNO Meetings/Events: 06

Mentorship/Collegiality: 02

Other Meetings/Events: 02

MNO Synod Leadership Conference: ☺

STATISTICS - HR Reporting

Year to Date			Year to Date
5 days per week, including Sundays	42	Days Worked	37
24hr period, 2 days per week	16	Days Off	13
Per Manitoba Mandatory Stats	2	Statutory Holidays	2
Total			Year to Date
4 weeks (+4 days rollover**)	32	Vacation Days	4
2 weeks (+9 days rollover)	23	Study Days	--
18 days (+5 rollover)	23	Wellness Leave	3

** The 4 days of rollover vacation time were specifically saved for post-Christmastime away with family.

IRON SHARPENING IRON

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

February 17, 2025

Dear Rev. Schmiedge,

On behalf of Iron Sharpening Iron at Princeton Theological Seminary, I am pleased to congratulate you on your acceptance into the next cohort of our Leadership Development Seminar, beginning in April 2025.

The 12 weeks include an orientation, seven sessions dedicated to highly participatory workshops, a group coaching session, and 1-on-1 coaching session.

The Spring/Summer 2025 dates and topics are:

- Tuesday, April 8 – Orientation
- Wednesday, April 9 – Leadership Identity
- Wednesday, April 30 – Designing Your Leadership Vision
- Tuesday, May 13 – Group Coaching Session
- Thursday, May 29 – Change Management
- Thursday, June 12 – Implementation and Planning
- Thursday, June 26 – Building Effective Teams
- Thursday, July 10 – Giving and Receiving Feedback
- Thursday, July 24 – Navigating Conflict
- Early August – 1-on-1's with Coach Shelley
- Thursday, August 14 – Final Presentations, Part 1
- Thursday, August 21 – Final Presentations, Part 2

We will meet between 12 and 1:30 PM ET for each session. You have to make 10 of 12 sessions to complete the seminar successfully. You will receive a certificate at the culmination of the program. You will be considered an alumna and invited to participate fully in the Iron Sharpening Iron network.

The cost of the program is \$1999.00. This can be paid in full up front or in two installments.

With these details in hand, we would appreciate a response from you no later than March 1, 2025 to reserve your place in the cohort. At that point, we will send the link to register and access materials for the seminar. If you have any questions, please contact Thais Carter directly at thais.carter@ptsem.edu.

In anticipation of doing a new thing—together,



Rev. Dr. Anne Stewart

Program Director, Iron Sharpening Iron
Executive Vice President, Princeton Theological Seminary