



1515 N Cascade Ave
Colorado Springs, CO 80907

**December 16, 2025, FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

Present

Yoshiko Anspach, Larry Bagley, Brenda Bocek, Bill Busovsky, Jason Fox, Julie Furstenau, Terry Hjelkrem, Deacon Joan Kuehn, Pastor Travis Norton, Chris White

Absent

Kiersten Lehmkuhl

Opening

The regular meeting of the First Lutheran Church council was called to order by Terry Hjelkrem at 7:04 pm.

Devotions (Terry Hjelkrem)

Terry's devotion theme was "Help is on the Way", a topic he related to Advent. Terry read from an old "Our Daily Bread", where a family who lost their home in the 2013 Black Forest fire found the small Jesus figure from their nativity set undamaged among the ruins after the fire. The family had been wondering "Is the baby Jesus still here" and finding this figurine gave them hope. Terry then showed a small figurine that he had recovered from the ruins of their house that was destroyed in the Waldo Canyon fire in 2012 – and noted that it also gave them hope and reminded them of the scripture in Romans 8:38-39. A reminder that yes, Jesus is still here.

Approval of Minutes

*****COUNCIL APPROVED NOVEMBER MINUTES AS PRESENTED*****

Finance Committee Report (Brenda Bocek)

Brenda presented the financial statement for November. The church had net income of \$22,498.58 for the month and now has only a \$15,351.65 net loss for the year. Yosh has reported that December offerings are coming in strong, so she hopes that this loss will be erased by year-end. It was noted that the local benevolence line is below budget due to money that was set aside for scholarships not being used. The line for fellowship is over budget by roughly the same amount. Pastor Travis noted that the church has been taking steps to decrease fellowship expenses (e.g. no donuts on Sundays; staff watching food costs more carefully). Yoshiko also recapped some of the one-time expenses that have impacted the 2025 budget.

*****COUNCIL APPROVED THE FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT*****

Senior Pastor Report

- Pastor Travis commented that he thinks this year's email devotions have been especially well-written. He noted that the church had its best-ever attendance at both the breakfast with St. Nick and the Angel Tree party. The Angel Tree program will not expand in size until the renovation of the Gathering Place is completed – we don't have room for more families!
- The "Inspire Faith" campaign held its lead giver event on December 11. Roughly 50% of the invitees were unable to attend, so the information packets will be mailed to those who could not attend. There is already over \$2.7 million pledged to the campaign, with \$1.7M already received. The goal is that the total commitments from the lead givers will be \$4 million by the time the project is launched to the full congregation on February 1, 2026. The renovation team continues to meet with CRP, and several

changes have been made to the preliminary plan already, such as enclosing the kitchen and creating a storage space in the basement for the sextons (next to the new elevator). Ongoing discussions are what the façade will look like and how the building will be clearly identified as First Lutheran Church. There is no timeline yet for the construction, but that will be in place before the full launch to the congregation in February.

- Several staffing changes were discussed:
 - Theresa McConnell will be moving to Arizona. She will continue to work remotely with reduced hours. Those aspects of her current job that cannot be performed remotely will be given (along with their compensation) to other staff members. This arrangement will be re-evaluated in mid-2026.
 - Lori Duncan will be reducing her hours and no longer performing the AV/Tech portion of her job starting in 2026.
 - Becca and James continue to do well leading the contemporary worship service and are picking up other tasks. This position will be re-evaluated in mid-January.
- Pastor Travis noted that there was a good turnout for the Thanksgiving meal in the Peel House that he and Victoria hosted. He also updated council on the work that he is doing with the synod and thanked council for encouraging and allowing him to take on these tasks.
- The list of new members was presented and **approved**.

Old Business:

- Sabbatical Policy and Pastor Carrie's Sabbatical

There was a robust and spirited discussion about the sabbatical policy and Pastor Carrie's updated sabbatical proposal. Discussion centered around how involved council should be in the details of a sabbatical, what items should be left to the sabbatical committee, what are appropriate reimbursable expenses during a sabbatical, and who should be eligible for a sabbatical. The following items were

approved:

- 1) The sabbatical policy will be amended to include all rostered leaders, and item (1) under "Eligibility and General Provisions" will be amended to read "A First Lutheran rostered leader is eligible for a sabbatical leave of three month's duration upon completion of seven years of full-time service."
- 2) Pastor Carrie's sabbatical leave was approved, and a sabbatical committee will be appointed at the January council meeting.

New Business: None

Reminders

- The next meeting will be on January 27, 2026, at 7:00 pm in the Peel House. Pastor Travis will give the devotion.

"Last Chance" Updates

- Brenda shared a couple of conversations that she had had with new members and stated how in both cases they could point to how a sermon really spoke to them and made them sure that this was their new church home.
- Larry complemented Pamela Haines and her crew for the amazing job of decorating all of the church and Peel House spaces for Christmas. He also expressed his appreciation for the Lessons & Carols service.

Adjournment with Prayer – Pastor Travis at 8:35 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Furstenau

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Secretary