

Lutheran Church of the Reformation
May 2021 Council Meeting
Meeting Agenda and Notes

Present: Molly Higgins, Elizabeth Hann, Pastor Mike Wilker, Pastor Ben Hogue, Emily Andre, Judith Mangubat, Andy Weaver, Karen Carlson, Lei Lei Middlebrook, Craig Haas, Ivy Finkenstadt, Chari Voss, Laura Swanson, Suzanne Hazard, Emma Harrington

Agenda:

May 18, 2021

6:45 PM Social time

7:02 PM Call to Order – Molly

7:03 PM Devotions, Prayer – Elizabeth

7:05 PM Secretary's Report – Approval of April minutes

- Craig moved to approve; Karen seconded. The motion was approved by all.

7:07 PM Financial report – Suzanne

- No financial report at this time since the meeting is so early.

7:08 PM Visit from Caring and Fellowship Ministries – Emma Harrington

- Care packages are being sent out 2x/year. Christmas bags and Easter cards are also sent out and the ministry team also calls members and send birthday cards.
- The Pastors will begin visiting shut ins since everyone is vaccinated. Lay minister visitation will be coordinated by Matt and trained by Pastor Mike.
- Coffee hour will be held on June 13th in the plaza through the fall.
- In the fall we will return to both services and will have 2 coffee hours. Sign-ups will be done with sign-up genius.
- Looking for ideas for fun social activities.

7:29 PM Reopening update and discussion

- The target date for having people in church is June 13th.
- Masks will still be required for the time being despite DC loosening mask mandates.
- We will no longer have the pre-registration form. If we decide to take attendance, we will just ask people to sign in at the church.
- We can safely have 100 – 200 people while still distancing, so we are going to try to follow that for now. This may get relaxed later.
- Windows will be open for circulation.
- Singing is undecided currently since vaccinated persons are “allowed” to sing, but unvaccinated folks should not sing.

- We will have bulletins, but will make sure that people do not need to look anything up in the hymnal.
- One thing that may be helpful would be to have cues for the online worshipers vs the in person worshipers.
- Overall, we will err on the side of caution and move back to “normalcy” slowly.
- Please see attachment for additional information.

7:49 PM Update on Listening Sessions – Discernment Process

- Possible Framing Questions during the listening sessions – who are we/who do we want to become in the next few years?
 - What is the future of ministry through Reformation?
 - What is God calling Reformation to do and become now?
 - What are the 2-3 initiatives Reformation should undertake to further the congregation’s mission over the next few years?
- The logical assumptions
 - God actively reveals Godself in creation, through history, in Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit.
 - God gives us a choice and the choices we make matter to God. God cares about our faith lives and faith communities.
 - Discernment is a gift from God mediated by the Holy Spirit.
 - Discernment is a spiritual discipline we practice. Discernment requires discipline and engagement.
 - God’s truth is revealed and tested within community.
 - Discernment unfolds in God’s time.
- Preliminary General Responses
 - Over 40 people have been visited.
 - People are glad we have stayed together as a community through the pandemic.
 - They are looking forward to community building and community care ministries.
 - They are confident in and glad for the pastors’ leadership.
 - There is a desire to continue to learn and to act on racial justice in DC and within the congregation.
 - Buildings and grounds issues were raised (kitchen, Sunday School class rooms, Parish Hall).
 - Children and youth are very important (include and consider them in worship, learning, facility use).
 - Confident about finances if we continue to deal wisely with the debt.
 - Many would like worship and music to be more expansive to include non-white European cultures, and some think we sing enough African American, Asian American, Latinx, and other cultures.
- Suggested Process moving forward
 - Continue to do more 1 on 1 visits. Currently most people visited have been fairly active church members.

- In June begin to add small group conversations. These will continue through July (perhaps longer) and will be oriented in a variety of ways, with the goal of associating with people that they wouldn't normally get together with.
 - Geographically
 - Area of Ministry
 - New interest area/cross-congregational issue
- Pray each week in worship throughout the summer.
- Council Retreat in the fall will be held to discuss findings from the small groups.
- Pastor Mike will check in with the listeners to see if they are ok to continue discussing with people.
- There is a tension between the broad questions and the specific initiatives.
- See attachment for additional updates.

8:35 PM July meeting poll

- Molly sent out a poll regarding the July meeting and if we should have in-person council social time.

8:30 PM Ministry Area Committee Action Items and Reports

Worship, Music and Arts - Ivy

- Choir is meeting for practice outdoors on the plaza. They have been discussing the reopening plans.

Spiritual Growth – Pr. Ben

- Blessed be the Body is winding down. The committee is looking ahead to the fall and what that might look like. The committee celebrated Evan and Jessica for their help with Sunday School this past year.
- There have also been discussions around property allocation for certain groups and ensuring that our space meets the needs of the congregation.
- Jessica Snowden has agreed to be the Sunday School Superintendent.

Fellowship and Caring Ministries - Chari

- No additional updates.

Engagement and Communication – Pr. Ben

- Angela has created an online directory.
- We applied for the Open Door Grant to hold a concert on the plaza, maybe up to 3. It is not merit based, but instead is randomly given.

Stewardship, Property and Finance - Laura

- No additional updates.

Service and Justice - Karen

- The Food Pantry is reopening! A full food order (for 180 bags of food) has been placed with DC Grocery Cash & Carry. DCGCC will deliver the food this Thursday, May 20. The food will be bagged this Sunday May 23 at the church, the bagging lead by Heather Strand. The food will be distributed from the church office on Wednesday and Thursdays.

- The food ended up being more expensive than previously so we need to keep an eye on that in the future.

Personnel - Craig

- Pr. Mike will meet with Larry King to discuss the final staff reviews and to facilitate Pr. Mike's review.

Archives & History - Emily

- No updates.

8:46 PM Staff Reports –

- Pr. Mike
 - Tegan has submitted her resignation and her last day will be at the end of August. This fall she will be going full time to school and begin her internship to finish her Master's degree.
 - Please also see the attached report.
- Pr. Ben
 - Bishop Leila completed his annual review.
 - Confirmation was this past Sunday, and we had Helene's baptism was a few weeks ago.
 - 2 additional young adults are also preparing for baptism.
 - Please see attached report for further information.
- Tegan
 - Please see the attached report.

9:03 PM Closing Prayer – Elizabeth

9:04 PM Adjourn

**Lead Pastor's Report
Lutheran Church of the Reformation
Congregation Council**

**Rev. Michael D. Wilker
May 17, 2021**

Leadership and Personnel

- ⊕ This week, May 17-21, I will take five days of continuing education. I'll attend the [Festival of Homiletics](#) (online) while camping at Cape Henlopen. I'll also read *Becoming a Hybrid Church* by Dave Daubert and Richard Jorgeson, ELCA pastors and consultants. At the end of May, I'll take a three-session course (May 27, June 3, and June 10) from Luther Seminary on hybrid ministries.
- ⊕ **Staff review process.** Paul and I will complete his review process May 25. In June, the Personnel Committee will facilitate my review with the Council and staff.
- ⊕ **Mutual Ministry** will meet May 24. The members are Will Anderson, Karen Cowden, and Jeff Hale, Clare Berke, Matt Cook, and Kathy Tobias.

Worship, Music, and Art

- ⊕ The first, small worship with people in the sanctuary was May 16, Confirmation Sunday. Our teams did very well helping to provide hospitality and encourage safe practices—we also learned.
- ⊕ Only worship leaders and Sunday school teachers and their families will be in the sanctuary on Pentecost Sunday, May 23. Sunday, May 30 is a pre-recorded service. Sunday, June 6, Reformation will join the Metro DC Synod Assembly worship service.
- ⊕ The worship service on Sunday, June 13 will be our first large in-person worship service with livestream. Recently, the local and federal guidelines shifted dramatically. The new guidelines give Reformation a bit more flexibility, but since our worship gathering in the sanctuary will include vaccinated and unvaccinated people we must maintain masking and physical distance requirements and other measures.
- ⊕ For the first time since the covid pandemic shut down, I led the prayer in the House of Representatives on April 26.

Spiritual Growth

- ⊕ The Easter season Dialogues on Sexuality series has sparked very good conversations—and a lot of appreciation for Lutheran theology and

practice. I've been delighted to share the leadership of these sessions with Elizabeth Hann on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings.

- ⊕ I'm grateful for all the ways the "Blessed Be the Body" theme has been lived out—especially with our consultant Kara Haug. Thanks to Pastor Ben for coordinating her sessions with parents, the book club, and preaching.

Caring Ministries and Fellowship

- ⊕ The committee met last week and will present some of our plans at Tuesday's council meeting.

Service and Justice

- ⊕ I submitted a resolution to the DC Conference Assembly asking the ELCA to support DC Statehood. The resolution was approved and forwarded to the Metro DC Synod Assembly.
- ⊕ Reformation's Green Team had 12 folks participate in the Anacostia Watershed Society annual Earth Day clean-up. We served with Varick Memorial AME Zion Church. This summer we will plan another event to help our congregations get to know each other more.
- ⊕ For the Washington Interfaith Network, I led teams of leaders to meet with four of the five proposed developers of the Reservation 13 parcels.

Stewardship, Property and Finance

- ⊕ As you might know, I meet weekly with Tegan to help manage the various property, space use, and financial management tasks that she oversees.

May 2021

Leadership

- Synod Commitments
 - Candidacy Meeting on June 2
 - Chaplain for Synod Assembly June 4-6
 - Participation in Racial Equity Plan
 - [Our proposed plan](#) was sent to Synod Council and to be discussed at Synod Assembly
- Started Synod-wide Book Club for *'Growing Young': 6 essential strategies to help young people discover and love your church*
 - Meets monthly through December
- Attended DC Conference Meeting on Saturday, May 24 with President Higgins (Zoom)
- Had annual review with Bishop. Leila Ortiz (Synodical Bishop)

Spiritual Growth

- Blessed be the Body Easter Theme is winding down
 - Wonderful participation at a variety of levels and in a variety of ways
 - Conversations with Kara Haug (parents and adults of children, teens, tweens)
 - Kara's sermon on May 2
 - *Shameless: A Sexual Reformation* - Book Club (with Kara)
 - Dialogue on Sexuality small groups with Pastor Mike and Elizabeth Hann
- Baptism of Helene Sherburne on May 9
 - More baptisms on their way - two babies (Willa Giertz Murphy (members) and Chase Ostman (newcomers) and two adults (Kiri and Nupur)
- Confirmation Sunday was Sunday, May 16
 - Confirmands: Danny Fitzgerald, Emmett Antonen, Larson Grant
 - Need to think of creative and better ways to engage congregation to celebrate these milestones (Sending cards with congratulations doesn't seem to work)
 - Hosted Coffee Hour celebration
- Youth Group was Sunday, May 16 (Final official Youth Group of year)
 - Hosted here at Reformation - Turn out of 16 people
 - Grateful to Emily Andre and Matt Aviles for their participation and support
- Sunday School is finishing May 23
 - A big thanks to Jessica Snwoden and Evan Benoit for their support and leadership with the online videos
- Graduation Celebration Sunday will be June 13
 - High School Graduates: Trevor Scofield, Daniel Voss, Karl Kittleson Wilker, Eleanor Grant, Sarah Ralston, Quinton Tobler Cunningham
 - College Graduate: Skye Carlson
- Spiritual Growth meeting Monday, May 17
 - Topics include: reopening safely while welcoming children, nursery care, summer spiritual growth, and looking ahead to fall programming

Engagement and Communication

- Met May 4 - (Pete Hillman, Mike Thompson, Jane Tobler, Matt Cook, Will Anderson)

- Majority of meeting was around website development and next steps
- Discussed ELCA Open Doors Grant project proposal
 - Summer Concert(s) with Ice Cream truck
- Directory portion of website will launch in June
 - Lifetouch Directory will no longer be accessible on the internet
- Continuing to meet with and welcome newcomers
 - Inviting them to join the congregation
 - In person 'new member Sunday' possibly this summer or early fall

Worship, Music, and Art

- Ongoing discussions around reopening June 13
- Will create pre-recorded worship video for May 30
 - Preach and Preside

Stewardship

- Participated in Synod Leadership Academy: [*Transforming Generosity through Storytelling*](#)
- On Tuesday, May 18 I start my Religious Fundraising Course and my final project will be in partnership with the Stewardship Committee (meet twice a week until July)

Caring Ministries

- Supported some High Schoolers who needed discussion and discernment around college and next steps
- Ongoing support for members with established Pastoral Care relationships and youth
- Continuing adult baptismal classes with one interested adult, starting with another soon
- Conversations and telephone calls with Senior members
 - May start visiting in person soon - Pastor Mike will continue as lead with Caring Ministries and visitation
- Meeting with two couples through premarital counseling (August 2021, April 2022)

Service and Justice

- Continued meetings with Food Pantry Working Group
 - This team was incredible! Thank you to all of them: Karen Carlson, Christine Pommerening, Elizabeth Wirick, Emma Harrington, Laurie Heim, Andy Weaver, Heather Strand, Judith Mangubat, Jane Tobler and many more.
- Food Pantry reopens next week.
 - Training Angela on Tuesday
 - Delivery this Thursday, bagging on Sunday

Director of Operations May Report for Council

- We submitted the FEMA grant application on April 22nd. In our application, we asked for funding for an access control system, four window replacements, two interior door replacements, the gate to St. John's, and a fence around the yard in front of St. John's. We will hear back about our application in July. If we are awarded the grant, we can begin to discuss which vendors we want to hire and map out the timing for each project to be complete.
- The electrician installed three exterior lights to illuminate the stairs in the parking lot that go down to the choir. This was a priority for the Property Committee because several people have tripped and fallen on the stairs when it has gotten dark.
- I prepared a spreadsheet to track all of the priorities the Property Committee set for 2021. Many of the projects are complete and the rest are underway or planned for the summer. Based on my spreadsheet, we will still be under budget when all priorities are complete. I sent an email to the Property Committee to update them on where we are at with all of the projects.
- Our next property meeting will be on Tuesday, June 29th. I met with our facilitator, Cullen, to begin working on our meeting agenda. During our meeting, we will discuss the priorities that seem to be rising to the top of the list and put together teams to research the projects prior to our final meeting. We will meet one more time in August. This meeting will result in a proposal for Council to review in September.
- I have been working with a window vendor to repair windows in the parsonages and add screens/storm windows to a few rooms. This was one of the needs identified during our property walkthrough last fall. When the work is complete, Pastor Mike's family, Pastor Ben and Marshall, and Christine will be able to open their windows for air flow. This work will also stop ongoing water leaks in Pastor Mike's house and better insulate Christine's bedroom windows during the colder months.
- Over the last several months, we have been testing the water in each building for the presence of lead. We recently learned there is a small amount of lead in the water in the St. John's building. To make sure all of the space users and Reformation groups have access to drinking water, I ordered water dispensers for each floor. They have arrived and are set up in the hallways of the lower and upper floors and in Hill Havurah's suite.
- Nestor, from Bruno Clay, is currently working to patch some holes in the roof of the office. This will be the first step taken to stop active water leaks. The next focus will be

tuckpointing. I will monitor our property budget to determine if it is possible to do this project in 2021 or if it will be best (and possible) to wait until 2022.

- We renewed our contract with Christine Goepfert. She will continue to be Reformation's Community Host through the end of 2021, with the possibility of an additional renewal. Christine has done a fabulous job in her role and I am so grateful for all of her work.
- We have started to welcome one-time space users back into the church. We hosted a group from the New York Immigration Coalition this week and will be hosting three different events for the School of Ethics and Global Leadership at the end of May. Capitol Hill Chorale will also be returning next week for rehearsals and a new recovery group will begin meeting on Wednesday nights.
- I will be on vacation next week in Wyoming. My family is fully vaccinated and it will be the first time we will all be together since Christmas 2019. I'm so excited and grateful for the time to rest!

All attendees must be masked and maintain physical distance from others not in their household. There will be disposable masks available for those who forgot. **In order to be respectful of all people, including children who may not be vaccinated, I think we should maintain physical distance guidelines.**

Here are other precautions Reformation is taking:

Attendance pre-registration. ~~You've already told Pastor Ben who among your friends and families will attend. We need to know this so we can cooperate with the DC Department of Health's contact tracing in the unlikely event there is a transmission of the virus.~~ **We probably will not be required to maintain contact tracing requirements--but this must be confirmed. If we do have to maintain attendance records we can ask people to sign in when they arrive (no pre-registration).**

Sanctuary safe seating. Reformation's large sanctuary will safely accommodate 200 people when households are seated six from each other in every other pew. Please follow the directions of the greeters/ushers regarding your seating. **Again, to allow for all people to be safer, I suggest maintaining the Safe Sanctuary Seating plan--at least until later this summer.**

Open doors and windows. We will have fresh air circulating through the sanctuary. The front doors will be wide open. Also, the doors and windows at the front of the sanctuary will also be open. The Property Committee may also install temporary fans to increase air flow. The HVAC system only recirculates indoor air in the sanctuary.

Singing inside by cantors only. Health and choral experts report that congregational singing cannot take place inside until 70-85% of the general, local population is vaccinated. See www.congregationalsong.org for more information. The cantors will be 20 feet or more from other attendees. Attendees may wave and clap hands, ring bells or use other hand instruments, and use streamers or other visual aids to join in the beauty of worship. **This is a difficult issue and we need more information. The District and CDC now say vaccinated, masked people can sing in church--but unvaccinated, mask people cannot.**

Communion in-person and on-line. Based upon its experience serving communion on the plaza, the Altar Guild coordinated by Sarah Stauderman has developed safe procedures for distributing bread, crackers, wine, and juice in the sanctuary. Those who worship from home may also share in Holy Communion by having their own food and drink ready for worship.

Cleaning and hygiene. According to the federal CDC, the risk of transmitting covid-19 via surfaces is low, but we need to take precautions. Wash your hands and use the hand sanitizers which are available at all entrances. Angelica Lopez cleans the sanctuary and restrooms on Fridays and the sanctuary will remain closed until worship on Sunday morning. Surface contamination is 99% less after three days.

These protocols may be adjusted as Reformation learns throughout the summer. We'll also adjust them to follow the federal and local guidelines as well as the rates of community vaccinations and infections.

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REFORMATION DISCERNMENT PROCESS UPDATE

COUNCIL MEETING ~ MAY 18, 2021



POSSIBLE FRAMING QUESTIONS

- What is the future of ministry through Reformation?
 - What is God calling Reformation to do and become now?
 - What are the 2-3 initiatives Reformation should undertake to further the congregation's mission over the next few years?
- 



THEOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

- God actively reveals Godself in creation, through history, in Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit.
 - God gives us a choice and the choices we make matter to god. God cares about our faith lives and faith communities.
 - Discernment is a gift from God mediated by the Holy Spirit.
 - Discernment is a spiritual discipline we practice. Discernment requires discipline and engagement.
 - God's truth is revealed and tested within community.
 - Discernment unfolds in God's time.
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PRELIMINARY GENERAL RESPONSES OVER 40 VISITS SO FAR

- Glad that we have stayed together as a community through the pandemic.
- Looking forward to community building and community care ministries
- Confident and glad about the pastors' leadership
- A desire to continue to learn and act on racial justice in DC and within the congregation.
- Buildings and grounds issues were raised. (Kitchen, Sunday School, parish hall)
- Children and youth are very important (worship, learning, facilities)
- Confident about finances, if we continue to deal wisely with debt
- Many would like worship and music to be more expansive to include non-white European cultures and some think we sing enough African American, Asian American, Latinx, and other cultures.

SUGGESTED PROCESS

- Individual listening visits continue
- Add small group conversations in June. Three possible ways:
 - ❖ Geographically
 - ❖ Area of ministry
 - ❖ New interest area/cross-congregational issue
- Pray each week in worship throughout the summer
- Council retreat in August