

THE BALSAM BRANCH

March 2023

Balsam Lutheran Church

1115 Mains Crossing
Amery, Wisconsin 54001

Laurie Kenyon Woods, Pastor



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Pastor's Pen

Dear church,

You may have noticed at the end of our service a few weeks ago, we said goodbye to the "Alleluias". During Lent, it is traditional to refrain from using the words "Alleluia" and "Hallelujah" and so at the end of our final worship service before Lent, we sang "Alleluia, Song of Gladness".

Read again the final two verses of the hymn:

Alleluia cannot always be our song
while here below;
alleluia our transgressions make us for
a while forgo;
for the solemn time is coming when our
tears for sin shall flow.

In our hymns we pray with longing:
Grant us, blessed Trinity,
at the last to keep glad Easter with the
faithful saints on high;

there to you forever singing alleluia
joyfully.

Why do we say farewell to alleluia/hallelujah for the next few weeks? The word itself is based on the Hebrew word, *halleluyah*, meaning "Praise the Lord," alleluia has been a word of great praise to God in the life of the church from the very beginning. It is a word of celebration, victory, and joy!

Simply put, in many ways the word doesn't fit in with the tone and content of Lent. The season of Lent invites us to look inward and be even more reflective about how we have failed to love God, neighbor, and self—to be even more honest with God, each other, and ourselves about how we have sinned by what we have done and what we have left undone. In some churches, they actually go so far as to "bury the Alleluia" in some ceremonial act. As we enter and journey through the season of Lent, the "death" and "burial" of alleluia prepares us

for the death and burial of the one whom we praise.

Then on Easter Sunday, we will join sing with joy and celebration:

Christ the Lord is risen today, *Alleluia!*

In due time we will “resurrect” alleluia as we proclaim and sing and rejoice in it. And while all of this might sound a bit silly or unnecessary, keep in mind it reminds us that above all else, we are an Easter people who can appreciate and acknowledge the full weight of sin and death and share the immeasurably good news of our Risen Lord!

Blessings,
Pastor Laurie

Balsam Lutheran Church

Unapproved Minutes of the Annual Meeting

February 5, 2023

Steve Fredrickson, church council president, called the annual meeting to order at 11:22 AM. Pastor Laurie Kenyon Woods opened with prayer. With 28 voting members in attendance, a quorum was determined.

Following some post-worship discussion related to communion cards, Steve began by explaining that the church council recently voted to discontinue the use of communion cards and was working on a new method of record keeping for the partaking of the sacraments. It was explained that members of the congregation are required to commune (and make a financial contribution) at least once a year to retain their voting status and

the cards were used to document that information.

Sue Fougner, Allan Moltzer and Charley Cran were appointed as tellers.

The verbal reading of the 2022 annual meeting minutes was waived. After giving time to ensure everyone present at the meeting had an opportunity to review the minutes, and given there were no questions or corrections, a motion was made by Vicki Hammer to accept the minutes as printed; a second was voiced by Charley Cran. Motion passed.

Reports from all standing committees are included in the annual meeting booklet. No additional reports were made from the floor. There were no questions, concerns, or discussion regarding the printed reports.

Steve Fredrickson reflected on his past year as council president, highlighting the continued good work that was being done by the members of our church. He extended a heart-felt thank you for working together to make things happen and keep things running. Each person and each job is vital to the success of the church. He extended a special thank you to Barb Henck for the years she served as the church janitor and welcomed Tammy Olson into the position. He commended the congregation and others for their generous financial giving which has been an integral part of keeping our doors open. He also voiced his gratitude for Pastor Laurie and her ministry with us. We are fortunate to have her and appreciate all she does for this congregation. A thank you was also extended to everyone who assisted during her maternity leave.

Pastor Laurie Kenyon Woods addressed all the changes that occurred in 2022, including the loss of loved ones, the

addition of new members and new ministries, and the blessing of her new baby and her absence during maternity leave. She reminded everyone that God's presence is always a constant during the uncertainty of change. Pastor reported that the photo directory will be on the way once she is able to finalize some of the information that the company is requesting. Finally, she encouraged everyone to read Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson's report on page 6 of the annual report booklet.

In reviewing items under Old Business, Steve thanked everyone on the anniversary committee for all their hard work in planning and executing a successful anniversary weekend celebration. It was a special time to visit and reminisce with those in attendance. He encouraged everyone to prayerfully consider becoming involved in a committee (or committees). All are welcome to participate.

There were several items for discussion under New Business. Steve thanked all council members for their service over the past year and extended a special thank you to outgoing council members: Betty Collins, Barb Friese, and Mike Judge. Council members with continuing terms include Sue Albright, Ruth Hart, Gail Peterson, Steve Fredrickson, and Jon Karsten. Three vacancies exist for a three-year term and one vacancy exists for a two-year term. Bruce Hammer, Bob LaBathe, Mike Christensen and Taunya Kobernick have expressed a willingness to serve on the council. Gail Peterson made a motion to accept Bruce Hammer, Bob LaBathe, and Mike Christensen as nominees for the three-year positions and Taunya Kobernick as nominee for the two-

year position. Vicki Hammer seconded. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

There were no elections for the members of the cemetery board.

Vicki Hammer and Gail Peterson provided a financial update.

There has not been a lot of activity with the savings account (Pg 24) and our current mortgage balance is currently about \$72,000 (Pg 23). Any contributions towards debt reduction are welcome to speed the reduction of the mortgage loan balance. Other aspects of the finances, as they relate to the 2023 budget, are listed in the following paragraph.

At their January 8th meeting, the church council accepted the proposed 2023 budget for presentation at today's annual meeting. The most notable changes in the budget were those correlated with Pastor's compensation and allowances (Pg 26, #51-54). Her salary and social security allowance show a slight decrease, while health insurance reflects a substantial increase. Pastor is now receiving her insurance, a basic family plan with an HSA, through the ELCA. It was mentioned, for consideration, that the cost of health insurance in this area is much higher than other areas of the state. Other areas of change included a slight increase for (#12) worship supplies to include the cost for streaming copyrights; (#71) church utilities as these costs, especially heat, have increased; (#72) repair & maintenance to cover the needs of our aging building; and (#75) insurance, which includes the increased cost for our multi-peril policy. There were, as well, a few decreases, including our (#34) WPCA sponsorship, (#57) supply pastor costs as lay people have graciously filled in, and (#68)

convention delegates given that Synod Assembly is now a one-day event reducing the need for an overnight stay and, if offered by Zoom, reducing the need for travel. Bob LaBathe made a motion to accept the 2023 proposed budget. Charley Cran seconded. Motion passed.

It was mentioned that future consideration might be given to providing raises to the church secretary, pianist, and janitor.

The Synod has requested that congregations amend their constitutions to match the language of that adopted by the Synod at the 2022 ELCA churchwide assembly. The content remains the same; the language has been modified. Bob LaBathe made a motion to accept the changes to the constitution as adopted by the Synod and amend our constitution to reflect those changes. Sue Fougner seconded. Motion passed.

Synod Assembly will be held on Saturday, April 29th at Bethany Lutheran Church in Rice Lake. There were no volunteers to attend the assembly. Interested individuals should speak with Pastor Laurie for more information.

Steve Fredrickson shared some final thoughts regarding his concerns for our future. He encouraged everyone to think of ways to bring more people in and to be in prayer about our congregation, our church and how we can increase our numbers.

Our next Annual Meeting will be held on February 4, 2024. There being no other business, Betty Collins made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Gail Peterson seconded. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Barb Friese – Church Council Secretary

Balsam Lutheran Church

Unapproved Minutes of the Church Council Meeting

February 12, 2023

In Attendance: Steve Fredrickson, Gail Peterson, Bob Labathe, Bruce Hammer, Ruth Hart, Jon Karsten, Mike Christiansen

Absent: Sue Albright

The meeting was called to order. Ruth Hart led with devotions.

Jon Karsten was nominated for secretary. A motion was made and seconded to elect Jon as secretary. Motion passed.

Steve Frederickson was nominated for president. A motion was made and seconded to elect Steve as president. Motion passed.

Mike Christianson was nominated for vice-president. A motion was made and seconded to elect Mike as vice-president. Motion passed.

Secretary's Report: The minutes from the January council meeting were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to accept the secretary's report as presented. Motion passed.

Treasurer's Report: \$12,000 was donated towards debt reduction. The church recently received a propane fill which leaves approximately \$5000 remaining from the propane pre-pay program. It is felt this will be sufficient to get us through the winter. A motion was made and seconded to accept the treasurer's report, as presented. Motion passed.

Pastors Report: Pastor Laurie is glad to be back from maternity leave. Pastor has been visiting an individual in a rehabilitation center who would like to join the church. Additionally, she will be meeting with a family in a couple of weeks that is also interested in the joining the church. Pastor recently conducted a funeral.

Committee Reports:

Adult Ed/Prayer: Bible Study is resuming on every Wednesday.

Memorial: Discussion on who should be the second signer for checks. Bylaws will be checked.

Property: We have the baseboard to install in the pastor's office. It needs to be stained before it can be installed. Fire door behind the kitchen needs to be fixed. This will be fixed soon as it is an important door to contain fire and explosion from the kitchen. This door is to be kept closed at all times. It should not be propped open. Fire sprinkler call list needs to be updated. Bob is looking (inquiry only) into a loop system that can be installed to help people with hearing aids hear the service.

Social Ministry: \$600 was made from the talent show. It was enjoyed by all and it was felt that this is an event that should continue.

Youth Education: This committee will start meeting more regularly.

Old Business:

Variety/Talent Show: See notes above with Social Ministry.

Visitors Cards: There was discussion around the creation of a visitor card that visitors could fill out when attending our church. It was felt this is a good idea and will be put into place.

New Business:

- 1) Synod Delegates Deacon Sign up: 2023 Deacon sign-up sheet was passed around. Each council member will deacon approximately four times during the year.
- 2) Paperworks Ad: It was decided to not buy a Paperworks Ad. It is felt that people looking to try a church are utilizing the internet. We should continue to keep our website up to date and inviting because of this.
- 3) Ruth Hart volunteered to go the Synod meeting on 4/29 in Rice Lake. We need a male volunteer also.
- 4) Other: It was discussed that the Social Ministry committee should take up and donate to the earthquake relief fund. Tammy Olsen (new janitor) has asked if she has to personally buy the cleaning supplies used. This is not the case and Tammy will be notified on how to handle the purchase of supplies needed. It was brought up that we need to encourage church members to utilize the script program where local businesses donate to the church for patronizing them. The script sign-up sheets are located in the fellowship hall near the couch.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned. We reviewed member and neighborhood prayer concerns and closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jon Karsten, Church Council Secretary

Financially Speaking

OOOPS!!! I made a big mistake in the update of our building loan balance this past Sunday. I realized after I received the March loan payment notice (which arrived late due to the weather) that I had deducted the recent additional debt reduction donations twice. Unfortunately, our loan balance is around \$70,000 as of March 1. This is still good news but not the great news that we prematurely celebrated on Sunday. Please continue to give to debt reduction in addition to your general fund offering. Every dollar of additional principal payment makes a big difference on the amount we pay in interest each month.

Our general fund balance as of February 28 is \$48,459.82. We have had some significant expenses that were incurred and paid in the past few months.

Consequently, our general fund cushion that we have enjoyed for the past few years has been decreasing. As I have noted before, we face increases this year in expenses much the same as we are all experiencing in our own household budgets. Please prayerfully continue your generous contributions to our general fund and special projects. All is so much appreciated.

In Christ,
Gail Peterson, Treasurer

Spring Rummage Sale

The Social Ministry Committee will be hosting our annual spring Rummage Sale on the afternoon of Thursday, May 4 and all-day Friday, May 5. Watch for more details on hours and Friday lunch options. We welcome any volunteers to assist with setting-up, managing the sale and packing

up! Please contact Connie Fredrickson or Gail Peterson if you would like to volunteer. You can bring your items for the sale to the church now and through Wednesday, May 3. Please place them in the board room (which is the furthest room beyond the kitchen). Please do not put them in the library as we will be using the library for sorting and folding.

Special Requests:

1. Please be sure that your items are clean and in good condition.
2. It would be helpful if you marked your boxes/bags with the contents. Such as "men's clothing", "housewares", "crafts", etc. Your labeling will help immensely with the sorting process.
3. If you have items that you feel should not be offered for a free-will offering, please help us out by marking the item with a suggested price.

Thanks much. Stay tuned for more information and details.

Collection items for back-packs:

March: bar soap

April: deodorant

March "Birth" days	
09 Mary Peterson	18 Brady Kobernick
10 Norman Fougner	20 Lisa Duden
11 Vivian Moltzer	22 Aricka Stream
13 Carlene Swanson	30 Brayden Miller
16 Lynn Johnson	31 Janice Petersen
17 Adam LaBathe	



W/ELCA MEETING MINUTES

February 19, 2023

The secretary's minutes for the January meeting were recorded in the February church newsletter.

Treasurer's report- we need to send in both conference dues (\$20) and synod dues (\$30). Vicki will make these payments.

The date for the Spring Salad Luncheon is April 15, with set up on April 14. The group then discussed plans for the event, including speaker selection, raffle donations, and program organization. We will fine-tune the salad sign up, dessert selection, and program at the next meeting.

It was decided to make personal care kits again. The Lutheran World Relief warehouses are almost empty. The cutoff date for bringing them to church will be June 1.

The next meeting will be on March 12 at 9:30.

Respectfully submitted,
Ruth Hart, Secretary

THANK YOU!
THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Greetings from the Global Mission Generosity team!

We want to **thank you for your support of ELCA missionaries!** We believe that we are called into community with our siblings in Christ around the world. Your generosity is helping to foster relationships far beyond the ELCA. Through your sponsorship of long-term ELCA missionaries and Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) volunteers, you are walking alongside our

companions across the globe as they spread the good news and serve our neighbors with love and care. Our whole fellowship is stronger because of you!

Remember to save:

Sheets, blankets, fabrics, tablecloths, etc for mission quilts

Aluminum cans for youth camperships

Prayer Ministry

- **Prayer Shawl Ministry** – Please let Pastor Laurie, Bonnie Corcoran at 268-9881 or Nancy Bottolfson at 268-8244 know if there is someone in need of personal prayer, a visit and a prayer shawl.
- **Prayer Requests** – Prayer Chain, please contact: Nancy Bottolfson at 268-8244 or email her at botolson@amerytel.net.

I AM

I was regretting the past and fearing the future.

Suddenly my Lord was speaking . . .

“My name is I Am”.

He paused. I waited. He answered.

When you live in the past, with its mistakes and

regrets, it is hard. I am not there.

My name is not I Was.

When you live in the future, with its problems and

fears, it is hard. I am not there.

My name is not I Will Be.

When you live in this moment, it is not hard.

I am here.

My name is I AM.