



Westwood Lutheran Church ANNUAL MEETING Minutes

February 11, 2024 – 9:50 a.m.

Hybrid Meeting in Sanctuary and Livestream

(Minutes will be approved at 2025 Annual Meeting)

✝ **Opening Prayer:** Pastor Sarah led a prayer of gratitude for the ministry and blessings in this congregation during the past year.

✝ **Logistics, Call to Order, Rules of Order:** President Kari Hentges discussed the logistics needed to hold this “hybrid” meeting with some members present in the Sanctuary and some Online in other locations, explaining that comments and votes may be made in person or by using the Chat box or QR code and that we will be voting on all motions at the end of Old Business. Kari called the meeting to order and announced that a quorum of at least 100 people were in attendance, thus satisfying the requirement of the Constitution. She then reported that Robert’s Rules of Order would be followed at the meeting and Karl Cambronne would act as our Parliamentarian for the event.

✝ **Secretary’s Report:** Secretary Gina Jacobson reported that the minutes of the February 12, 2023, Annual Meeting were published in E-News the week prior to this meeting and hard copies were available this morning for congregation review. She asked if there were any additions or corrections to be made. Hearing none, she made the motion to approve the Minutes. The motion was seconded, and a vote will be taken after the Old Business is completed.

✝ **Pastors’ Report:** Pastors Jason and Sarah shared a video highlighting the past year, using Westwood’s Journey Inward/Journey Outward theme as a metaphor for many of the components of our life together in 2023. Staff transitions including the transition to a new Executive Pastor (Sarah), Pastor Tania moving to two-thirds-time pastor, along with other staff changes; a staff retreat; the 10-month journey to establish a new Roadmap; the addition of environmental sustainability to Westwood’s core values; the fact that close to \$1M dollars have been raised for the Prayer of Good Courage Appeal and that the dream of Rise Early Learning Center has come to fruition. All of these happenings and more were celebrated and called out as evidence of the journey of courage and hope for what God has been up to in this faith community. Pastors Jason and Sarah thanked the staff, the congregation, the Council, the financial management team, and all other committees and groups for their ministry, faithfulness, and commitment to Westwood.

✝ **Council Report:** Pastor Jason thanked President Toby Biebl for his dedication and hard work this past year. He shared that Toby has decided it was time to step down from this position to engage in issues around his health and that although sad, Council fully embraced Toby’s journey and accepted his resignation. At the same time, Council voted President-Elect Kari Hentges, to serve as Council President. Kari will serve the remaining two years in this role. Many thanks to Toby for his faithful leadership and excellent work. Please be sure to take a minute to read the Council President’s Report found online in the 2023 Annual Report.

✝ **Nominations Team:** Pastor Jason introduced Justin Pouliot, Chair of the Nominations Team. Justin thanked the Nominations Team for their diligent work in 2023, reminding the congregation that they will vote once for the full slate of nominees following the conclusion of Old Business. Justin read the following slate of Nominees: Nominations Team for Year 1 of 2-year term: Allison Bailey, Rachel Palermo, and Paul Wogen. Nomination Team for Year 2 of 2-year term: Justin Pouliot, Sara Rowan, and John Scott. Church Council: Dan Albright, Treasurer (4 year term); Tim Dufault, Pres-Elect (4 year term); Audra Howard and Sonja Western, Representatives At-Large (3 year terms); Luke Yost, Representative At-Large, completing the final 2 years of an At-Large Term. Justin moved that the Slate of Nominees to positions and terms in office be accepted. Motion seconded and will be voted on following the Old Business. Council President Kari Hentges thanked all who served in leadership roles in the past year(s) highlighting the ministry of Toby Biebl, Lara Cleveland, Nicole Dimich, Tom Hegblom and Dave Hill, all of whom are outgoing Council members.

✝ **Ministry Minute:** Pastor Jason highlighted the ministry of Jenelle Bullen, thanking her for her strong background and expertise in early childhood education and expressing his gratitude for her service on the board of Rise Early Learning Center.

✝ **Treasurer’s Report:** Treasurer Dave Hill reviewed slides found on the screen and on our website in the Annual Report, emphasizing the following 2022 internal financial statement audit and 2023 financial highlights:

- The annual internal financial review audit for 2022 was completed in 2023 noting that Westwood's financial statements as presented fairly represented the church, WECC, and capital funds and had no findings nor recommendations.
- Westwood experienced a very strong finish to 2023 with a great December, enabling the Church and WECC funds to meet their respective budget.
- Combined revenue from the Church, WECC, and Prayer of Good Courage Appeal totaled over \$3.8M
- Church giving finished behind budget (515 households gave in 2023, down approximately 50 from budgeted number and from prior year). Expenses and capital transfer expenses were lower by almost same amount resulting in an on-budget total Church Fund, setting things up nicely for 2024. (Expenses lower than budgeted due to timing of staff and prudent expense management. Capital transfer expenses were less than budget because we had less in capital expenditures as first thought)
- WECC fund balance also on budget. WECC transferred \$312K to Capital Fund to self- support their outdoor play area and west side classroom improvement projects. Expense was lower than budget due to fewer students and corresponding teachers.
- Total contributed to-date for the Prayer of Good Courage Appeal amounts to \$850K toward our \$1M goal. We are on track for completion in spring 2024.

Dave recognized Westwood's new Director of Administration, Jane Severson. To her credit, the financial management of Westwood continued to move ahead smoothly. On behalf of the Financial Management Advisory Group (FMAG), Dave thanked Jane and our accountant, Becky Arndt, as well as the congregation for all it has done and continues to do to financially support Westwood. Dave moved to approve the 2023 Financial Statement and the 2022 Audit. Motion was seconded. Voting to follow Old Business. The detailed report can be found online and on file in the church office.

✝ 2024 Proposed Budget: Dan Albright, Chair of Finance Management Advisory Group (FMAG), reviewed the 2024 budget found on the screen and on our website in the Annual Report. He outlined proposed Church Operating Fund receipts reflecting a 7% increase over the prior year receipts and proposed expenditures including the impact of a full year of staffing and a 10% allocation of faith giving to the community partnerships. In addition, Dan summarized proposed receipts/expenses for WECC and the Base Capital Fund. The proposed Capital Funds budget includes an added column for a one-year Bridge Appeal with \$105K budgeted for 2024. Ending balances on all funds are positive and reflect continued strong congregational support. Dan thanked Director of Administration, Jane Severson, and staff for their work on the budget, FMAG for their review and advice, and Dave Hill for his skilled financial management as Council Treasurer. Dan moved to approve the 2024 budget. Motion was seconded and will be voted on following Old Business. The detailed report can be found online and on file in the church office.

✝ Vote to Approve Old Business: President Kari Hentges announced that the Old Business of the meeting is concluded, and it is time to vote on the motions. She asked members to vote vocally or on-line with the QR code. Vote to approve the 2023 Minutes was unanimous YES. Vote to approve the Slate of Nominees was unanimous YES. Vote to approve the 2023 Treasurer's Report was unanimous YES. Vote to approve the 2024 Budget was unanimous YES. At the end of the meeting, votes will be confirmed and an announcement on the motion to approve all four business items made once online voting can be tallied.

✝ Ministry Minute: Pastor Sarah recognized Margaret Wiatrowski. Margaret and her family were drawn to Westwood due to Westwood's open, welcoming atmosphere and strong faith community. Margaret participated in the adult confirmation class last summer and was confirmed in a moving service in October, expressing that the class helped her to connect with her faith more deeply. Pastor Sarah invited all of us to take a moment to read Margaret's story online in the 2023 Annual Report.

✝ Congregational Statistics: Pastor Jason reviewed congregational statistics, highlighting strong attendance at weekly worship with an average weekly in-person attendance of 450 plus an average 150 attending the Live Stream per week. Our social media numbers have increased (Facebook and Instagram). Westwood added 75 new members this year and continues to have many strong pieces when it comes to the sacraments including 24 baptisms in 2023.

✝ Westwood Early Childhood Center Report: Director Kellee Nelson reported that Westwood Early Childhood Center (WECC) lived out stewardship in 2023 in rich and meaningful ways, impacting the lives of over 115 children, 84 families, and 32 employees; serving as an inspiration and model for educators and leaders w/in the field of early childhood education, including Rise Early Learning Center; renewing and maintaining all its accreditations and certifications;

continuing to be a workplace with a culture that reflects respect, recognition, and professionalism. In addition, Kellee shared that WECC continues to embrace parent partnerships and honors the extraordinary potential of children.

✝ **Ministry Minute:** Pastor Sarah highlighted Steve Kalpin. Steve and his family are Westwood members and have been very involved the last few years. Steve and family have especially enjoyed their time at Camp Wapo when they experienced the family camp weekend. Steve and family have appreciated the warm welcome they have received and enjoyed through the ministries here at Westwood.

✝ **Community Partnerships:** Pastor Jason invited all to read the information in the report relating to community partnerships, reminding us of the way we financially support our community partnerships through faith giving. In 2023, 11.2% of faith giving (\$164K) was shared with several different organizations, including STEP, Aquila Elementary “Every Meal” organization, Arusha Road Lutheran Church in Dodoma, Tanzania, Westwood’s weekly community meal, and others. Pastor Jason mentioned the POGC Appeal nears its \$1M goal, hoping to reach the goal early spring.

✝ **Lutheran Memorial Foundation:** Chris Finseth, Foundation President, shared the mission of the foundation and thanked the congregation for its support the past 50 years. Chris explained that tax deductible gifts to the foundation are held in perpetuity and only the earnings are paid out in the form of grants. Church leaders and the foundation determine what grants are supported. The foundation seeks to foster a culture of generosity.

In 2023, the Foundation received donations of \$47K. \$61K of grants were made. See list of grantees in the foundation report online. Chris invited us to consider including the Foundation in our legacy plan and mentioned there are many giving options available. Chris and/or any of the Foundation board members are available if anyone is interested in learning more about the Foundation.

In 2024, the Foundation plans to provide \$70K to support the ministries at Westwood. The Foundation invites all to the April 20, 2024, Cribbage Tournament Fundraiser. Chris concluded by thanking the current and past Foundation board members and the congregation for their support.

✝ **Program Highlights:** Pastor Jason invited congregation to take some time to review the online report highlighting the many excellent ministries at Westwood, such as Congregational Care, Music + Worship, Children, Youth and Family Ministry, and so many others.

✝ **Ministry Minute:** Pastor Jason highlighted Peggy Riley, who was on the Tanzania trip this year. Peggy expressed that the trip to Tanzania was a journey of a lifetime for her. Highlights included meeting so many loving people and having an opportunity to build relationships with the people she met there along with new friendships with Westwood members.

✝ **3rd Chapter Ministry:** Pastor Tania expressed that she loves her new role and new ministry area at Westwood and that the Vocation of the 3rd chapter has been an exciting and new focus to offer Westwood. Reporting there are 525 people between the ages of late 50s to mid 70s interested in this new ministry, Pastor Tania is delighted with the interest. Participants have deep questions of what is next in their lives and strive to explore ways they can live out their values in new ways. Pastor Tania is grateful Westwood is supporting this exciting new ministry.

✝ **New Business:** President Kari Hentges asked congregation if there was any new business to discuss. None was offered.

✝ **President’s Closing:** Kari Hentges thanked everyone for their attendance and thanked the pastors for their great leadership. She reported voting is closed and announced that the motion to approve all four business items carried! Pastor Jason thanked Dannica for her excellent job coordinating this meeting.

✝ **Prayer of Good Courage:** President Kari Hentges led the congregation in the Prayer of Good Courage.

(Note: Realizing the February Annual Meeting was never officially closed, and recognizing there were not any additional comments in the meeting chat box, a motion was made and seconded to officially close the meeting at the February 20, 2024 Council Meeting. Motion passed unanimously.)

Respectfully submitted by Gina Jacobson, Council Secretary