

Epiphany Evangelical Lutheran Church

Church Congregation Council Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 10, 2025 – 7:00 PM

Attendees

Present (in-person): Mike Dunavant (President), Rob Boyle (Vice-President), Markus Groener (Secretary), Jennifer Edwards (Treasurer), Missy Hill, Jim Huddle, Phillip Martin, Gwen Newman, Leigh Pickels

Absent: Sarah Lang, Cindy McClintock, David Schiller

Sabbatical: Joseph Bolick

Guests (via video conference): Melinda Martin, Debbie Sexton to present ELNS budget information

1. Call to Order

Council Vice-President Rob Boyle called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM, as President Mike Dunavant would be arriving a couple of minutes late, and had asked to start the meeting on time.

2. Devotions / Opening Prayer

Markus Groener led devotions inspired by the biblical story of Joseph (Genesis 37:1–6) and Dolly Parton's "Coat of Many Colors." He invited reflection on how love, even in humble or difficult circumstances, shapes identity and worth. Members shared personal stories of formative family figures, including mothers, grandmothers, and aunts, reflecting on their legacies and the spiritual richness woven into their lives. The devotion concluded with a heartfelt prayer asking for wisdom, unity, and the Spirit's guidance during council work.

3. Epiphany Lutheran Nursery School (ELNS) Budget Approval

Melinda Martin reported that ELNS concluded a successful school year with 81 enrolled students, despite higher mid-year attrition due to shifting family circumstances. Looking ahead to 2025–2026, enrollment is strong with 84 students registered and a noticeable trend toward more full-week attendance. Two teachers are not returning, and hiring is underway. Tuition increased 5% for the coming year, with 3–4% staff raises. The school continues to offer tuition assistance, with four students receiving support (two full, two partial).

Debbie Sexton reviewed the budget, noting a modest increase in income due to tuition adjustments and stronger attendance patterns. Total budgeted income is \$344,000, with expected expenses closely aligned, yielding a balanced, zero-net-income budget. Personnel costs saw a \$6,000 increase. Reserves exceed \$200,000 and are positioned to absorb any necessary classroom expansion.

Melinda also requested the church's willingness to collaborate with ELNS on classroom space, should growing enrollment necessitate an additional room in the education wing.

- **Motion:** Leigh Pickels moved to approve the Epiphany Lutheran Nursery School 2025-2026 budget.
- **Second:** Missy Hill seconded.
- **Vote:** ☒ Unanimous approval

4. Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Council Meeting Minutes from May 13, 2025**
- B. Receipt of Reports from Pastors, Staff, and Ministry Teams**
- C. Receipt of Treasurer's Report and BOL Update**

Treasurer Jennifer Edwards shared that contributions continue to lag behind projections, with a YTD deficit of roughly \$36,000. While April and May showed weaker giving and higher expenses, she noted that the trend mirrors past years, where contributions increase significantly in Q4. At least one known large donation is expected in December. Council discussed the impact of wider economic uncertainty on giving patterns and acknowledged the need for ongoing monitoring.

- **Motion:** Jim Huddle moved to approve the consent agenda.
- **Second:** Missy Hill seconded.
- **Vote:** ☒ Unanimous approval

5. Receipt of Communications

- A. Council received multiple updates regarding members in need of support, including:**

- a. Health-related issues:
 - Jeff Girton
- b. Death in the family:
 - Carol Mawyer at the death of her mother, Joann
 - Tony Caruso at the death of his mother, Nancy. Pastor Martin shared that Nancy passed away just hours after joining Epiphany as a member during a pastoral visit. Her commendation service was held at home in a touching moment shared with family.

6. Old Business

- A. Stained Glass, Sanctuary Carpet Repairs**

The sanctuary carpet has been successfully re-stretched. Although visual discoloration remains, the folds themselves have been resolved. The stained glass project remains on schedule for summer completion. The council agreed that this work is critical due to the high value of the windows and the potential for further damage to occur.

- B. AC Replacement Quote**

The sanctuary air conditioning unit failed unexpectedly. A replacement package unit, including new ductwork and exterior installation, is now quoted at \$93,000 (the original estimate was \$50,000 which the church council had approved for replacement). James River AC is the recommended vendor, and the new unit cannot be installed for another 4–6 weeks. Financing, partial use of reserves, and a possible extraordinary endowment distribution are under consideration. The Finance Committee will return with recommendations on how to best accommodate for the increase in estimate. Temporary mitigation options for summer services include holding livestreamed services in Price Hall, utilizing fans, and providing congregants with alternative spaces during worship.

- C. Update on "Epiphany Shines" campaign**

Missy Hill reported that additional planning is needed before launching the fundraising campaign. A working group, including past campaign leaders and interested council members, will meet on **Wednesday, June 25, at 6:00 p.m.** The group will review lessons from the 2018 campaign and begin shaping a new strategy for communications, volunteer engagement, and messaging.

D. Proposed Endowment by-laws changes - report

Rob Boyle recommended postponing this discussion until Cindy McClintock and David Schiller can participate, as they are key voices in the proposal; no action taken.

E. Kneeling pads for communion rail

Markus Groener reported that he had spoken to Kevin Barger and provided him with initial research done on kneeling pads for the communion rail. He informed Kevin that the church council would like to ask the Worship committee to take up researching options and provide a recommendation to the council.


7. New Business

A. The July Council meeting has been rescheduled for Monday, July 14th at 7:00 p.m. due to scheduling conflicts.

B. Insurance Policy Review (Jim Huddle)

The Finance Committee reviewed the church's insurance coverage. Two recommendations from advisor Brian:

- Increase employee dishonesty coverage from \$50,000 to \$100,000 (ELCA recommendation)
- Increase umbrella liability from \$1M to \$2M
- The total additional cost is ~\$600 annually.

- **Motion:** Leigh Pickels moved to approve the \$600 increase in insurance payment.
- **Second:** Jennifer Edwards seconded.
- **Vote:**  Unanimous approval

C. Mailbox Security (Jim Huddle)

Jim Huddle raised concerns about the unsecured exterior mailbox, citing incidents where contributions had been stolen at other churches, not at Epiphany. To mitigate this risk at Epiphany, the council discussed replacing the box with a locking unit or exploring a mail slot option. Jim Huddle will consult with Property Committee Chair Rob Hamlin.

D. Agreed Upon Procedures Review – Banking Signatures (Jim Huddle)

A recent audit revealed outdated signatories on the church's financial accounts. The Finance Team will develop a recommendation for who should be added or removed, as well as how to manage transitions going forward. Updating may require all authorized signers to be physically present at the bank.

E. To the Congregation via the Epiphany Examiner Newsletter

Pastor Martin volunteered to draft a communication for the congregation regarding the sanctuary AC outage. It will provide options for worshiping in cooler spaces and affirm the church's efforts to find a long-term solution. This will be shared via email and in the Sunday bulletin.

8. Anything for Hanne?

- Markus Groener will provide Hanne and Turner with the approved council minutes from the May meeting for posting to Epiphany's website.

9. Next Meetings

- "Epiphany Shines" planning meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 25th, 2025, at 6:00 pm.
- The next council meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 14th, 2025, at 7:00 pm.

- Jennifer Edwards will lead devotions and the prayers.

10. Closing Prayer

- Markus Groener offered a prayer celebrating the love and grace symbolized in the devotion's theme, asking God to guide council members in unity, service, and joyful leadership.

11. Adjournment

- Mike Dunavant adjourned the meeting at 8:47 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Markus K. Groener
Church Council Secretary