

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church

Mission: Knowing Jesus & Making Jesus Known

Vision: To be a beacon of light and hope that impacts the world

Church Council Minutes: February 23, 2026

Members in Attendance	Absent	Attending
Kathy Ewald, Chair	Kris Reenstjerna	Pr. Elisabeth Himmelman
Jim Bono	Laurie May (Recording Sec.)	Pr. Brian Wise
Cindy Hildner		Pr. Ben Sloss
Kelly Hoke		Jean Jepson
Terese Jackway		Sam Petras (Treasurer)
Dave Mevis		Alexandra Colaianne, Wellness
Rachel Petty		Jim Harms, Property
Matt Pickering		
Teresa Thompson		

Opening Prayer Devotion—Terese Jackway

Action Items

- Approval of January Council minutes

A motion to approve the January 2025 minutes was made by Jim Bono and seconded by Matt Pickering. The motion was approved.

Discussion Topics

1. Presentation by Jim Harms— Celebration Phase 3 HVAC Replacement

1. Reported the HVAC updates which are included in the Committee Reports below. In the property committee 20% down for the last 2 roof units. \$23,975 which is in the approved budget. Next year \$95,000 which saves \$4,500. Actual planning and contingency planning.

A motion to approve the HVAC expenditure was made by Jim Bono and seconded by Terese Jackway. The motion was approved.Approved: Jim Bono

2. Kathy Ewald thanked Jim Harms for his leadership and the Property Committee. Jim Harms reported succession planning for leadership of the team. (See Property Committee Report below.)

2. **Presentation – OSLC Wellness (Alexandra Colaianne, Congregational (Wellness Manager)**

1. Presented an overview of the OSLC Wellness Ministry and shared her background as the owner and therapist of Modern Balance Integrative Therapy. She reviewed the purpose of the ministry, the newly formed Wellness Board structure, current initiatives, programs in development, and the upcoming Congregational Wellness Survey.
2. The Wellness Ministry seeks to live out the OSLC Welcome Statement through the **Eight Dimensions of Wellness**, recognizing and supporting the whole person. Alexandra noted several trends affecting the congregation and broader community, including high stress, loneliness, limited emotional support, youth mental health concerns, and a growing need for connection and community. She emphasized the church's unique opportunity to provide whole-person care and support. The purpose of the Wellness Ministry is “**Cultivating Wholeness for All.**” Rooted in faith and shaped by compassion, the ministry brings the OSLC Welcome Statement to life through care, education, and advocacy. It honors the whole person and supports individuals, families, and the wider community across all eight dimensions of wellness, fostering resilience, belonging, and hope. Recent initiatives include *The Well*, *Thrive*, *Kids Club* (joint effort w/ CYFM), *Common Ground*, staff support, one-to-one congregational support, the Harvest Meal, Renewed by Grace, youth group support, and recruitment of Wellness Board members. The Wellness Board has met twice to define its structure and roles and to draft the Congregational Wellness Survey which will be coming out this Spring. Programs currently in development include *The Money Journey*: a financial wellness program, *Sacred Intimacy*: an enrichment program for committed couples, *Weekly Common Ground*: midweek contemplative worship service, *Divorce Care*: a support group, and *Held by Grace: A Wellness Gathering for Moms* (planned for May 2026).
3. Question: Dave Mevis regarding Parish Nurse. Seeing how it is showing a plan for offering a variety of services.

3. **2026 Landscape Contract**

1. Provided by Pastor Brian, Approved by the congregation through the budgeting process. Had budgeted \$26,000 but received bids which fell below the budgeted cost.

4. **Pastor Support**

1. Pastor Mutual Care team council members held a “brainstorming” meeting in January. The plan was to have discretionary funds for Pastoral use for ministry. The “Love Your Pastor” campaign was created in February and was successful to support the Pastors with funds to purchase non-budgeted needs.
2. Pastors need help from the Council to educate the congregation about boundaries. More difficult now that Pastors have personal cell phones. Definition of what is emergency, education of congregation members regarding

healthy boundaries and guidelines to allow Pastors time to refresh and recharge. Option of a new app for phones that is a technical solution. Need educational solutions. Suggestion encouraging congregation to send an email, call the office phone number, not texts and observe Pastor's are off on Fridays. Council members provide information to our "sphere of influence". Dave Mevis offered to coordinate with the Pastors and Communication staff, Theresa Jackway regarding how to and not to communicate with the Pastors.

5. **Liaison assignments**

Council members were asked to consider committees to be a part of as a Liaison.

Caring for Creation - Terese Jackway

Finance - Sam Petras

Human Resources - Kathy Ewald

Nominating - Matt Pickering
Memorials: Kris Reenjsterna

Worship & Arts - Cindy Hildner

Mission and Benevolence - Teresa Thompson

Endowment/Stewardship - Dave Mevis

Just Love - Kris Reenjsterna, Rachel Petty

Celebration Children's Center - Terese Jackway

Wellness - Jim Bono

Youth & Family Ministry Board - Kelly Hoke

Property - Dave Mevis

Generative -

Committee Reports

Finance Committee – Sam Petras

-Operating cash balance increased \$25k during January

NOTE: We are well above the \$150k threshold

-FY26 - Giving up 12% \$12k vs. same period last year and up 13% \$13k vs. budget

NOTE: Giving is up \$13k; rent is down (\$1k); programs are down (\$1k).

-FY26 - Comp & Benefits is \$86k (77%) vs. \$112k giving

NOTE: Budget for January 84%; last January Actual 75%.

-17% of 2026 pledged gifts received through January (8% of calendar year is complete)

NOTE: 2026 pledged gift budget is \$783k; 2025 pledged gift budget was \$821k; 2024 pledged gift budget was \$731k.

OSLC Financial Review UPDATE - Rick Lebeck and Mike Redenius (members of the congregation) conducted an independent review of the accounting department's functions and financial statements. A summary of the review, along with recommendations for consideration, was presented to the Finance Committee. The report and recommendations were discussed in

detail at the February FC meeting. Recommendations from their review have either been implemented or currently in process.

On behalf of the Finance Committee, we would like to thank both Rick and Mike for their time and talents in conducting this review!

Youth & Family Ministry Board - Kelly Hoke

Youth and Family Ministry Board: Meeting 2/17/26

CYFM Updates:

Brittany and Pastor Ben are looking into several communication apps that could be rolled out for youth programs and possibly the entire church. They also continue working to communicate accessibility in CYFM across the church. March 14th is Lay Leadership Day. Youth focused volunteers are encouraged to attend.

ELCA Youth Ministry Extravaganza Update: Updates were shared from a recent conference that Pastor Elisabeth and Brittany attended.

Pastor Elisabeth -Attended sessions on reforming youth ministry in the 21st century. Key learning - the importance of connection with other people who are doing this work. Young people are craving community, being known, and justice work, and the church as a whole is finding that over a million people are walking away from church every year.

Brittany - Focused on knowing more about supporting differing abilities and neurodivergence in our walls. Learned a lot with regard to intentional planning ahead instead of addressing issues as they come. How do we get the word out about how these needs are met to address the issue of belonging. How are we engaging right away and welcoming people in?

Discussion points:

How do we do outreach? Being present and connected. Our biggest outreach is probably the preschool. We've done some community outreach events. If this building didn't exist on this block, would people notice?

In future months, the committee will do a deep dive/SWOT ANALYSIS and think more about these questions.

All members of the committee were asked to complete the RRD Inventory. Results were discussed at the meeting.

General range was mid to low/across the board. The areas discussed were:

- Faith is shared by adults 3 low 2 medium
- Faith is internalized through spiritual practices.
- Faith is applied through service and justice.
- Faith is catalyzed by family intimacy and intentionality.
- Faith is prioritized by the entire faith community and leadership.

These results show that we've got an opportunity for growth! How does this play into what we do next year? How do we prioritize where and how we want to grow?

Next Steps: The committee will Review each CYFM area for the remainder of the year in our meetings. We will plan a retreat in June where we will discern our roles and needs moving forward.

Upcoming:

Sunday A.M. - 6/7/8th grade will be doing their service projects following worship at both campuses

Sunday Night - Mission Trip info meeting for high school/8th grade (Milwaukee) - 5 day trip, then followed by 8th grade ignition night.

This weekend - VBS registration opens (week of June 22nd) - RIC methodist curriculum

March 8th = Feed The Need

Crosswalk = 11am Journey with Jesus worship before open, music, journey - close with worship and then cinn

Easter services (4) and Breakfast 8-9am (youth fundraiser)

Sunday April 12th - Variety Show Youth fundraiser
– baskets to contribute: reach out re: contributions

Worship and Arts - Cindy Hildner

Pastor Ben reported: **February 10, 2026 Worship and Arts Board Minutes**

Present: Pr. Ben Sloss, Kathie Howe, Kristi Redenius, Mike Gervase, Nicholas Davis

Volunteers/Logistics for Easter:

- Discussed need for volunteers at Easter Sunday services (7:00/9:00/11:30 at OS and 10:15 at Celebration)
- Nicholas made note to make sure treats are taken to Celebration as they were not at Christmas.
- Kathie and Kristi will work on a plan for communion flow for 10:15 service
- Kathie will make sure the font is set up for Easter
- Pr Ben will make sure the bread for communion is at Celebration.
- We discussed Easter lilies. We believe Jan Dusek will get those purchased.

Volunteer Training:

- A training for worship volunteers will be held at Noon on March 29th (Palm Sunday) at OS. However, if desired, a "field trip" can be taken to Celebration.

- Nicholas asked Kristi and Kathie what would be most helpful for overall volunteers at Celebration. Kristi mentioned building up the hospitality team. Nicholas will brainstorm some ideas.

5:00/9:00/11:00 Liturgy:

- The liturgies for 5, 9, and 11 will be changing on Feb 22.
- Nicholas will hold a training at the end of choir for Kyrie singers to go over the new music and for chanting the Psalm.
- The Liturgies will change again on Easter Sunday.

Other Business:

- Pastor Ben will set up a time to go over Planning Center with Kristie and Kathie
- It was suggested to place the announcement papers on the seats at Celebration

Nicholas Davis reported, in addition to the above Worship & Arts meeting minutes:

Tracy Jackway and Nicholas worked on including in the Weekly Connections information on the music ensembles that will be at each worship service.

Attendance provided by Kathy Clolinger, Accounting Manager

February 26		In Person Attendance						YouTube Views		
		5:00	9:00	10:00	11:00	Total		9:00/11:00	10:00	Total
2/22/2026		40	137	100	67	344		107	42	149
2/18/2026	Ash Wednesday	164			71	235		38		38
2/15/2026		56	113	127	33	329		115	40	155
2/8/2026		54	133	94	44	325		107	52	159
2/1/2026		50	135	114	77	376		122	18	140

January Attendance

	In Person Attendance					YouTube Views		
	5:00	9:00	10:00	11:00	Total	9:00/11:00	10:00	Total
1/25/2026	49	94	68	21	232	151	-	151
1/18/2026	53	122	84	35	294	122	57	179
1/11/2026	41	167	79	46	333	67	37	104
1/4/2026	49	111	115	44	319	43	27	70

Property Committee - Dave Mevis
(Condensed notes)

- New member: Jacob Himmelman welcomed.

Project updates

- Acoustics: Sanctuary acoustics OK; recommend audio system update. Fellowship Hall needs sound-management on walls (and possibly ceiling). Proceeding phased: wall treatments first; DIY install planned; exploring CVG design help.
- Spring projects (when weather permits): repair Memorial Garden brick wall; install sidewalk from Sanctuary emergency exit; remove dead English ivy from east front.
- LED conversion: Greg received bids to remove ballasts/rewire ~75 fluorescent fixtures. Fitzgerald selected (\$3,550). Greg to document bids and seek approval.
- Basement exhaust stack: ~8' crack leaking onto boiler controls during heavy rain. Agreed to replace with cast iron pipe. Greg N. to document bids and seek approval.
- Sustainability/energy audits: Greg N. tried contacting Naperville Sustainability Manager about grants and audit firm recommendations. Jim will follow up with C4C referral.
- Code review: Grant Committee recommended assessing potential Naperville code upgrades needed for certain projects; will pursue appropriate approach.
- Memorial Garden labyrinth: Memorial Committee recommends chosen firm (visited site and acceptable). Firm proposing alternate material to granite; finalize material/colors then sign contract. Fundraising event planned early March to raise remaining funds.
- HVAC Phase 3 (Celebration): Jim proposed proceeding with final two-unit replacement this fiscal year using Phase 2 contracting approach. Budget can cover 20% down payment now, balance next fiscal year. Approval to present to Council on Feb 23 obtained.
- Budget: Jim presented draft next fiscal year and 4-year projection including Phase 3. Committee will continue refining.

Next meeting: Monday, May 18 – Conference Room, OSLC.

Mission and Benevolence - Theresa Thompson

2026 February Report to OSLC Council: SHINE Story & Event Support

- 1) Tracy Jackway, Jean Jepson, Jim Bono, and Teresa Thompson met in February of 2026. The group revisited last month's discussion of streamlining communication channels at OSLC. A typed framework that was created in collaboration with the OSLC pastors was handed out for future reference.
- 2) The group revisited last month's list of ministries, missions, and worship support groups to determine who (Jim or Teresa) could interview members of each and who in each group would have information to share with the congregation.
- 3) Jim proposed a way of bringing in other writers to Shine, writers that would create articles once or twice a year. The group proposed a list of people that have written for OSLC in the past. Jim and Teresa divided up the names and will approach these people to determine their willingness to be writers for SHINE on an as

-needed basis.

- 4) The group reviewed what articles are the focus for the March SHINE and who is writing them. All articles are due by mid-month to provide Tracy with enough time to compile and edit the SHINE magazine.

Report to Council February 23, 2026

The early months of 2026 have been full of meaningful work in Children, Youth, and Family Ministries. Much of my time has been spent walking alongside Brittany as she continues to grow into her leadership, helping to strategize for long-term stability and thoughtful growth, and supporting our CYF (Youth) Board Chairs, Michele Larson and Jon O'Toole, as we discern vision and direction together. I am deeply grateful for their partnership and shared commitment to nurturing faith in the next generation.

Additionally, I am serving on a contract basis with the ELCA as a Region 5 (IL, WI, IA, Upper Peninsula-MI) Representative for Youth Ministry. In collaboration with colleagues from all nine regions across the country, I am mentoring youth leaders in discipleship and spiritual practices, and currently leading an 8-week Zoom course with 15 leaders across our region. I am also helping prepare for the 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering in Minneapolis, and this broader church work continues to inform and strengthen the ministry we share locally.

At the end of January, Brittany and I attended the ELCA Youth Ministry Extravaganza in St. Louis (January 31–February 2). This annual conference is a gift to CYFM leaders across the country. Brittany focused her learning on accessibility and accommodations — a reflection of our shared desire to make every child and youth feel fully welcomed and supported. I participated in Youth Gathering trainings. Beyond the workshops, it was a meaningful opportunity for Brittany to build relationships, gain confidence, and grow in her role. Although continuing education funds are not explicitly built into her position, I am hopeful we can continue to invest in opportunities like this, as they directly bless our ministry and the families we serve.

Brittany and I have also been prayerfully discerning one potential shift in our CYF programming schedule. In January, we surveyed 8th grade families about whether Ignition (high school youth group) should remain on Sunday evenings or move to Wednesday nights. While families understandably do not yet know all of their high school commitments, the strong preference was for Wednesday evenings — especially for families with younger siblings already participating in Surge and Children's Choir midweek.

Currently, Ignition includes three seniors (graduating May 2026) and three juniors. We also have ten active 8th graders, five of whom attended our 8th Grade Welcome Night on February 22. This younger cohort represents a hopeful and important season of growth, and we are intentionally investing in relationships with them as they prepare to step into high school ministry.

I continue to give thanks for the faith of our young people, the dedication of their families, and the leaders who pour into them. It is holy work to walk with children and youth as they discover who they are in Christ, and I am grateful to share that work with this congregation.

In ongoing conversation with Ray Graham and our partners who use the third floor of the Our Saviour's campus on Wednesday evenings, it became clear that moving their programming to the lower level of Celebration beginning in the summer of 2026 would best serve everyone involved. This change significantly improves accessibility for their clients through elevator access, and it also opens a new and exciting possibility for our own ministries: transforming the third floor of Our Saviour's campus into a dedicated youth wing.

This thoughtful and collaborative decision allows us to better live into our values of hospitality and inclusion, while also strengthening our commitment to children and youth. Beginning in the fall of 2026, all youth programming will be gathered on Wednesday evenings at the Our Saviour's campus, creating a consistent rhythm and a stronger sense of belonging for our young people.

Our high school Ignition youth first heard about this change at the 8th Grade Welcome Night this week. We are continuing to move slowly and prayerfully, seeking ways to involve youth meaningfully in the transition and to listen carefully to their hopes and concerns. Our goal is not simply a smooth logistical shift, but a change that feels grounded in care, trust, and shared ownership.

As we look toward summer, Brittany and I are grateful for the volunteers who have already stepped forward to help lead Vacation Bible School. A VBS Leadership Team has been formed, including Luann Gerth, Katee O'Toole, Jon O'Toole, and Nicholas Davis, and we are actively seeking one or two additional leaders. Their willingness to serve is a reminder that CYF ministry is truly a shared calling, sustained by the gifts and generosity of this community.

Finally, I have been spending time reading current research and participating in learning opportunities focused on the future of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries across the church. As part of this broader discernment, I invited the CYF Board to complete the Relational Discipleship Inventory, an assessment tool designed to help leaders identify both strengths and areas for growth. I share what follows with the Council so you have a clearer picture of the current realities of CYF ministry at OSLC, as well as the hopes we are prayerfully holding for where God may be leading us next.

I remain deeply thankful for the Council's support, the dedication of our leaders, and the trust placed in this ministry as we continue to nurture faith, relationships, and belonging among our children and youth.

CYF Ministry Across the Church: Relational Discipleship for the 21st Century
First, what do we know about young people and the church?

(sources: Fuller Youth Institute, TENx10 <https://www.tenx10.org>):

1. Young people need the church. For decades, the American Church has copied culture and isolated young people. The culture told us young people want and need multiple years of peer bonding without much, if any, adult intervention or connection.
2. The church needs young people. Young people have great gifts to offer the church: insight, passion, a willingness to take risks, a commitment to justice, and so much more. They are the church now, not the future of the church.
3. Faith is more likely to “stick” for children and youth into adulthood if: 10 people at church call them by name, and when each young person has 2-5 mentors/guides who are not parents but are also not “just chaperones.”

Second, what do we know about Children, Youth, & Family Ministry across mainline denominations?

1. CYFM paid staff have a high burnout rate. The average length of time a full-time CYFM director stays is for 2 years.
2. CYFM is often siloed, but: churches are enriched, grow, and are healthier when teenagers are meaningfully integrated into the life of our faith community.
3. Lay leadership is necessary in creating congregational buy-in and leading to culture shifts around youth ministry in the church! If we put every egg in the basket of a paid staff member, ministry becomes about that leader. Then when that leader leaves, CYFM ministry falls apart.

Relational Discipleship Inventory (RDK) Results

Each area for response is based on the Fuller Faith Formation Framework “Relational Discipleship Inventory.” Responses are rated as Low, Medium, or High. This is not intended to be an end-all, be-all assessment, but a tool for analysis.

Source: <https://www.tenx10.org/faith-formation-framework>

Faith is shared by adults: Medium/Low

- This (likely) means: We are somewhat intentional about engaging adults in the faith lives of young people, but need to work on equipping them to talk about faith and identity in Jesus even more.
- Goal: Each young person has 2-5 adults in the church who are not spectators or chaperones but mentors and guides.
- Growth area: go deeper to equip the adults in our congregation to mentor young people.

Faith is internalized through spiritual practices and learning: Low.

- This means: Young people are struggling to internalize faith.
- Goal: Each young person is welcomed as they are, learning the foundations of faith lived out in everyday life.

- Growth area: focus on connecting learning to identity in Christ; going deeper into foundations of faith.

Faith is applied through service and justice: Low

- This means: Young people are likely disengaged in our church and not having the impact they desire. Is it busy-ness? Is it that service projects aren't deep enough?
- Goal: Each young person is serving within our congregation and pursuing justice in the community (as an embodied act of faith and being able to name it as such).
- Growth area: Create opportunities for intergenerational serving; work with adults to invite young people to volunteer together.

Faith is catalyzed by family intimacy and intentionality: 2 high, 1 medium, 2 low

- This means: We are missing out on engaging families in developing a faith that matters.
- Goal: each young person's family is equipped to build shared faith.
- Growth area: Prioritize equipping parents and caregivers to help build a shared faith foundation.

Faith is prioritized by the entire faith community and leadership: 3 low, 2 medium

- This means: We prioritize young people somewhat, but need to work on church structure, culture, and decision-making for the next generation.
- Goal: Entire congregation and leadership (pastors, staff, council, CYFM board, volunteers, parents, older adults, etc) are focused on helping young people build a faith that matters.
- Growth area: Invite more adults to connect with and integrate young people into the broader faith community.

Discussion: With these in mind, how might we function as a CYFM board? How might we prioritize and implement an area of growth in the next year? What might we hope the CYFM Board is and can be?

Pastor Elisabeth & Brittany's hopes for the CYFM Board:

1. Prayer Team - We need, want, and expect God to move in and through Brittany, every volunteer and young person, and the congregation. A regular rhythm of prayer helps us prioritize the movement of God in, through, and among us.
2. Storytellers – storytelling changes hearts and minds. The more you share, the more the entire congregation will begin to see that CYFM is not about programs but about lifelong faith.
3. Sticky faith team – be in relationship with young people in this church! What area of CYFM are you passionate about, interested in, or want to get to know better? We don't need a lifelong commitment, but we do need you for the ways God has invited you into the current time and place.

How will we prioritize where and how we grow?

1. Review each area of CYFM ministry over next 3 months (1 per month: SS, Surge, Ignition)
2. June meeting dedicated to looking back and planning ahead
3. Discern your role through prayer and conversation
4. Pray together

Pastor Ben reported that on Friday 2/27/26, there will be an event for the mission Bright Stars of Bethlehem. This event includes music from local Palestinian musicians and activists, “The Sumud Collective” featuring Ronnie Malley, a presentation by Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb and an exhibit in Our Saviour’s Art Gallery titled “The Lilies of Gaza,” featuring artwork by 22 Gazan women.

Unfinished Business: None

Next Meeting:

Monday, March 23, 2026 — Opening Devotion - Kathy Ewald

Closing Prayer: Terese Jackway

Notes respectfully submitted by Cindy Hildner, Secretary and Laurie May, Recording Secretary