

Church Council Minutes
February 10, 2026

We Gather as God's People

- **Lighting of the Candle** > 6pm
- **Sharing Highs and Lows**
- Devotional: Steven Pena

Aligning with our purpose

Our Vision: *Following Jesus – Loving All*

Our Mission: *Jesus calls us to be a community, embrace nourishing mind, body, and spirit.*

Our 2024-2025 Commissions:

Reverent Worship *Nurture a culture of expectation, experience, experimentation, and excellence.*

Spiritual Growth *Open opportunities for all ages, abilities, and affirmations to expand their understanding and faith.*

Community *Expand opportunities for authentic relationships in and outside the congregation through activities and experiences of fellowship and service.*

Welcome *Cultivate a culture of radical hospitality and affirmation. Break down hurdles to belonging.*

Celebration *Recognize the gifts and milestones of life gathered by God into this fellowship*

We Gather Needful Information

Roll Call All Present, except for Ann & Stephanie

Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting:

George made the motion to approve minutes from last meeting. Nancy seconds. All in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Action Items from Director**
- **Andrew Lockhart > Nothing to report d/t being absent**
 - **Missions >**
Cont with Helping Hand, serving meals to Gulf Breeze, & ACCT

- **Parish Life**>
 - Coffee hour attendance is very low; a simplified offering of cookies and coffee is planned to lower barriers, with volunteers needed to host occasionally
 - **Faith Formation** >
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- **Nancy Carpenter**
 - **Worship team** >
 - Lent Holy Week
 - Ash Wednesday > 6am, 12n, 6 pm > Pastor Rhoades to play piano in chapel at 6am.
 - Different Teams doing dinner > Diane & Nancy First
 - **Archives**>
 - Nothing to report
 - **Welcoming Team**> (short term) >
 - Recruitment & training of individuals as Greeters
 - Box Society > free concert> recorded > May 8-9, 22-23 in 2026
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- **George Vasquez** >
 - **Property**
 - New Boilers
 - Jim >
 - working on getting AC fixed > need monetary help
 - Freezer fixed, also fixed door lock
 - Roof leaking in chapel
 - Ice maker dying
 - Elevator & Boiler inspected
 - Cont Replacement of Roof on Lyceum > lady from Historical Foundation may help with a Grant > Jim to meet with them

Cont > Christina to take over Books for Lyceum > ?
have council approval > set up Bridal Show > need to
vote on this

- **Stewardship>**

- Going well with story telling >

- Intent Cards > not many have pledged

- Long-Term Stewardship: Monthly financial updates
are planned; 20% of budget is for
insurance; creative solutions to
reducing costs are being explored.

- The council's transparency at the annual meeting, including sharing insurance costs that consume over 20% of the budget, was positively received by the congregation
- They are actively exploring creative options to reduce the insurance burden as a key budget pressure point.
- Stewardship efforts include securing speakers like William Schuster and promoting ongoing engagement despite competing social calendars.

- **Senior Pastor's Report > see attached**

- The council discussed focusing on inclusivity through the Reconciled In Christ (RIC) program, recognizing its appeal to younger demographics and its role in breaking down social barriers

- **Presidents Report>**

- The council is actively addressing an \$84,000 deficit with complex fund movements and unresolved IRS and SBA issues

- The Realm software is central to financial tracking but requires better data entry discipline and possible adaptation of budget categories to fit system constraints
- A training session with Deacon Amy Else on Realm is being coordinated to improve financial transparency and reporting accuracy (01:28:36).

Significant progress is underway on building upkeep with a focus on grants and air conditioning replacement

The council is weighing short-term fixes versus full replacement, mindful of future maintenance risks; the final decision may fall to future councils beyond 15 years

- Efforts are ongoing to boost fundraising for these capital projects, with ideas like branded fans proposed to engage the congregation in support
- The website needs clearer access to council minutes, team information, and newsletters to improve transparency and community connection.
- Updating the site is viewed as essential, as it serves as the "front porch" for visitors and members alike

The council identified the church website as outdated and underutilized, planning a focused refresh with fresh perspectives

- A small task force, including younger members like Jackson Glenn, is proposed to update the website to better reflect current mission, commissions, and council minutes.
- The council is committed to aligning mission, vision, and commissions with their strategic goals for 2026-2027, emphasizing inclusivity and community nourishment

Action items

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- **Vice President's Report >** did not attend
- **Youth Coordinator >**

- Faith formation attendance remains below pre-pandemic levels, with six active confirmation students and limited engagement from legacy families who tend to avoid non-child-centered events

Community Engagement and Program Participation

The group recognizes a slow but steady rebuilding of community involvement, with challenges around attracting consistent participation

- Newer members and young families show more interest, highlighting a generational shift in engagement preferences
- Parish life initiatives like dance classes and fellowship events are positively received but need broader participation; social media activity has increased to better promote these efforts.
- **Financial Officer's Report** > see attached
- Jim explained that the deficit is partly hidden due to transfers between multiple funds and credit card usage, complicating the financial picture.
- The church is missing critical IRS paperwork from 2019 and 2020 quarters, delaying resolution; mailed copies were sent recently to expedite processing
- Pastor agreed to write a forgiveness request letter to SBA due to missed payments totaling \$6,400 per month, aiming to ease cash flow stress
- Credit card debt stands around \$55,000 with high interest; the council plans to negotiate forgiveness on interest rates and slow pay down given current cash constraints
- Sandra Tetley is actively pursuing matching grants, including one to the Moody Foundation, to fund roof repairs and potential upgrades to the church's electrical and air conditioning systems.
- Coordinate meeting with Deacon Amy for Realm financial training with council members and staff

- Continue refining monthly financial spreadsheet and reconcile deposits to better track budget vs actuals
- Contact credit card company to negotiate better interest rates
- Communicate with IRS and SBA regarding missing tax documents and delayed payments; prepare forgiveness letters in coordination with Rick Watkins and Pastor

Old Business >

- Narthrex/pew bid > on hold
- Quarterly Forums for congregation > Oktoberfest, Budget, Updates > next meeting in June to look at 1st four months budget & housekeeping
- Discussed the You Tube Video > Becoming an RIC (Reconciling in Christ) Congregation > shared discussions with Congregation
- Bake & Bible Study group ed

New Business

- Council Members to get their pictures taken for Newsletter.
- Talk to Church Members about Donations for AC unit and Magazine Ministry Team Fair/Promotion
- Confirmation Class started
- The council discussed a spring fundraiser, including a **strudel and wine clearance sale**, targeting an additional **\$5,000 to \$10,000** in revenue to help close the budget gap.
- Conduct survey of young families regarding nursery attendant role before final budget decision.
- The council aims to improve workflow and operational clarity across multiple domains, focusing on training, volunteer reliability, and financial systems
- Explore options for lowering internet costs while maintaining live streaming quality; negotiate with Comcast or alternative provider
- Investigate trash service alternatives to reduce costs, including possible use of city services; report findings to council,

Verify IRS receipt of quarterly payroll filings; address discrepancies with Realm software and IRS

- The rollout of handheld payment devices (Clover) for Oktoberfest has been successful overall, though initial setup was rough; the monthly \$1,188 subscription fee is under review for cost efficiency
- Better coordination and communication with the bank and vendors are planned to reduce redundant fees and improve payment processing.
- A retreat or half-day session is being considered to refresh commission goals, with a possible focus on advancing the RIC inclusivity initiative, supported by a potential external facilitator
- Organize simplified coffee hour starting with cookies and coffee to increase attendance; recruit volunteers for hosting rotation
- Identify and introduce potential members for website task force including younger congregants such as Jackson Glenn and Liz Aguirre
- Post council meeting minutes and newsletters on church website to increase transparency
- Explore bringing a RIC facilitator for a retreat/commission renewal event
- Prepare letter to SBA requesting payment relief and forgiveness
- Advance planning for faith formation curriculum including upcoming sessions
- Notify Terrell about unused cookies for mission outreach
- Investigate bank account payment postings and Clover payment system fees
- Continue pursuing grants for church air conditioning and electrical upgrades Council (Collective)

- Schedule a half-day retreat to review and update commissions for 2026-2027

We Gather Discerning God's Direction at First Lutheran

- **Where do we perceive God is nudging us (What is going well)?**

More out in the community

Grief Share

More programs offered for Adults, Youth and Family > for Church & outside Church

Budget, Website

Family Ministry

- **What might we need to reconsider (What is not going well)?**

AC Unit

Worship Team. > Different views for services is difficult > tradition is good. Maybe piano, etc.

Poor Communication

Certain individuals doing everything

Cliques within Groups

Fema

Credit Card

- **What is something new we perceive God is prompting us to consider?**

Classes

Get new members more involved

Kids Corner cont

We Prepare to Depart

- **What do we need to communicate to the Congregation? >**
Upcoming events
Recognizing New Families
God is nudging us to go forth in the community
- Call for volunteers to relay notes to the Congregation

- Reminders of items to be followed up on > see new business
- Closing prayer for the Congregation
- Lord's Prayer