



January 2026 Council Meeting Minutes

Date: 01-13-2026	Time: 6:30 PM	Location: Fellowship Hall and Zoom
<p>Those present are indicated in bold: Pastor Dan Nelson, Deacon Savannah Olaphson, Pastor Steve Olson, Kelly Meyers (Church Administrator), Tom Getchius (President), Julie Maes (Vice-President), Kirsten Stenoien (Treasurer), Rick Ites (Financial Secretary), Kim Whalen (Secretary), Jennifer Johnson (Adult Faith Formation), Emily Sienkowski / Karina Nelson (Children's Education), Amanda Ropchak (Evangelism), Bev Osekowsky / Ruth Lunde (Parish Fellowship), Jolene Engle / Nicole Seieroe (Middle School Youth), Ellie Scheler (High School Youth), Lou Hernandez (Property), Kelly Robert (Social Ministry), Jim Andreen (Stewardship), Eric Lovestrand (Worship, Music & Arts)</p>		
<p>Call To Order: 6:34 PM Devotion: Tom G. Adjourned: 8:35 pm</p>		
<p>Approval of November Minutes: will do by email</p>		

Action Item	Who	Status	Expected Completion
Update the proposed motion not to allow non-member use of space (that is not non-profit or for-profit)	Kelly M.	In Progress	2026
Proposed updated constitution and bylaws, including a change to the Service & Justice committee name.	Pastor Steve	In Progress	2026

ATTENDANCE AND FINANCIAL UPDATES

Attendance - Rick I.

- online attendance numbers was impacted by issues with Livestreaming in December
- about 27,000 total attendance for 2025
- 2025 attendance was about 2 to 1 live vs livestream (4% higher in person than last year)

Giving - Rick I.

- December giving was great. We exceeded the budget for regular giving.
- 2025 exceeded 2024 for giving, with the last six months being especially strong.
- Looking back as far as 2022, it looks like first quarter has actually been our highest quarter for giving, even though historically we have expected the most in the last quarter.

2025 Financial Statements - Kirsten S.

The following is similar to what will be presented at the upcoming annual meeting

- **2025 Balance Sheet = Statement of Financial Position**

- Our building was listed as \$5.27 million in previous years, but now at \$11.3 million. That is because it is how our insurance company assesses the building. It does not include the land. It is not market value. It is assessed by an external source. We do not have a mortgage.
- The top few lines of this document are our Assets: cash, investments, building
- We have no Liabilities: no mortgage, no debts
- The bottom part of the document is Equity. We have about 4 months of cash reserves. We don't want to let it get much lower than that.
- Various funds contain money that is set aside because we have already promised we will spend it in a certain way.

- **2025 Summary**

- Details by account number will be available electronically but won't be printed in the hard copy
- Our final 2025 numbers were extremely close to the annual budget.
- Personnel is our biggest expense at about 65% of budget. This includes salaries and benefits for clergy and all full and part time staff. This area was about \$61,000 under budget in 2025 because:
 - our interim pastor started later than assumed in the budget, and worked fewer hours than budgeted.
 - our church nurse retired, and we did not backfill the position as a paid position
- Building costs are our other large expense, which was over budget in 2025
 - Although we have no mortgage, we still have insurance and utilities costs.
 - Two roof sections required immediate replacement during 2025, which used up what was left in our Raise the Roof fund, and also required \$45,000 more to come out of general fund.
- We also spent more than budgeted on:

- communion supplies (due to higher in person attendance)
 - music purchases
- We were able to offset expenses in Youth and Family with dedicated funds.
- Expenses were about \$23,000 under budget for 2025.
- Giving minus Expenses came out \$19,000 better than budgeted for 2025.
- We had budgeted for a deficit, but came out \$3,000 in the black.

2026 Budget - Kirsten S.

- Executive council had a special meeting to discuss the 2026 budget in detail.
- Changes have been made since last meeting to help make a more balanced budget:
 - Removed tent from Welcome Weekend expenses to save about \$8,000 (has historically been donated, so not included in general fund budget)
 - \$18,000 removed from building expenses by delaying parking lot fixing, sealcoating, and striping. Will have to happen eventually, but pulled out for 2026
 - The Pastor's Expense Fund was significantly reduced. This fund is used for reimbursing clergy and staff for lunches, gatherings, etc.
- The proposed budget is at about a \$3,000 deficit, closer to balanced than last year's budget.
 - Income: budgeted slight increase from 2025
 - Expenses: right around budgeted income
 - Staff cost of living adjustments kept at 3%
 - We moved salaries up for some staff members to get them closer to synod guidelines.
 - Budget reflects Pastor Steve at Immanuel through April 30.
 - Associate Pastor (.625 clergy position) is budgeted to begin mid-year (not expected be on staff for summer)
 - Insurance costs have gone up
 - MN paid family leave is a new cost
 - Benevolence budget is staying at 16%
 - Snow removal, de-icing, and utilities costs are all going up a bit
 - Adult Ed increase since we plan to put more emphasis in this area in 2026
 - Not included in general fund budget
 - Two additional roof sections. We need to raise funds for this.

Jolene moved to approve the budget as presented. Julie seconded, All voted to approve

ANNUAL MEETING (Jan 25, 2026) -Tom G.

Agenda

- Tom does not plan to use the Annual Meeting to highlight any specific committee, but suggests that we find ways to highlight them throughout the year. We had some discussion about how to make sure this happens. It may come down to each committee making a point of doing this.
- Julie M. suggested celebrating how we worked together to get through the transition.

Building Contingency Fund

- Best practice would be to keep around 1% of value of building in this fund.
- We only have \$12,000 in the fund so far.
- Tom G. will mention this briefly at the Annual meeting as a heads up that more communications will be coming on this topic.
- We discussed this fund.
- Lou H. has compiled a list of known building needs
- Pastor Dan mentioned we are trying to build up a Properties committee. Some other areas that could use more volunteers include Fundraising for the Building Contingency Fund and Evangelism.

Ballot

- Still need more members for nominating committee.
- Also need more synod assembly delegates.

PASTORAL AND STAFF UPDATES

Pastor Dan

- The council congratulated Pastor Dan on his new position as Senior Pastor.
- Heads are swimming on staff right now due to ICE surge in MN and recent shooting death.
- Kelly M. and Pastor Dan are working on the Parochial Report. This is a correction to membership numbers that wasn't previously kept up to date. It has been at least 10 years since we have gone through the rolls, but we will be continuing that work this year.
- 4 upcoming baptisms.
- New member cycle coming up. Evangelism is helping improve the process for onboarding new members and helping them feel connected to the Immanuel community.

- We had a wedding.
- For backfilling the Associate Pastor role, we need to spend more time considering our options. Pastor Dan thinks we do need two pastors. There is enough work for a full time Associate Pastor, but not enough money to fund it. It might be easier to hire someone stepping into retirement to focus on Visitation. Another possibility to consider that would be more economical would be to renegotiate some of the ways that our existing staff participate in ministry.

Deacon Savannah

- Caring ministry update has had a very good response from people interested in helping.
- Not filling paid nurse position, but still have people volunteering to help fill the role.

RESPONSE TO LOCAL CURRENT EVENTS

We had a high level discussion of the local situation with the surge of ICE agents in Minnesota

- Plan: It would be good to have a plan for if ICE agents show up at Immanuel.
- Prevention: We want any response to help the situation stay peaceful and safe.
- Practical (versus Performative): The response needs to match what is actually happening.
- Posts and other communication: Mentioned as a topic, but not discussed in any detail.
- The Synod emailed information on Fourth Amendment rights (protection from unreasonable search and seizure), which Pastor Dan forwarded.
- The legality around what is a protected space has changed, so everything in the church building other than personal offices is considered public, with the possible exception of the sanctuary when not in use for services.
- Participate: The Service & Justice committee is compiling a list of vetted, safe, peaceful ideas for ways to help our neighbors.
- It would also be good to generate ideas for how to support mental health during this time
- Prayer