**MINUTES OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING**
**OF PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH**
**on Wednesday Nov 20th, 2024 at 7:00 pm**

**Vision Statement:** *Peace Lutheran Church is a welcoming, worshipping and witnessing community in Jesus Christ through whom healing, wellness, love and peace are offered unconditionally to all.*

**Mission Statement:** *Celebrating and Sharing God's Love for All.*

**ATTENDANCE:**
**In-person (Hern Room)**: Rosie Lantzsch (Co-chair), Sirkka Taylor (Co-chair), Fiona Haapalehto (Secretary), Rainer Knabenschuh, Shakura Persaud and Cameron Ylimaki, Pastor Ronnie Smith.

**Via Zoom:** Kavita Kanavalli, David Wishart.

**Regrets:** Sunny Wishart (Treasurer), Analisa Chand,
**Congregational Members:** Shari Nelson, Chair, Outreach
**Guests:** none

**Email motions held between Council meetings, if any, are documented at the conclusion of the meeting minutes.**

1. **Call to Order: Rosie** called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm.
2. **Opening: Rosie did an opening prayer. Fiona will do the devotional for the next meeting.**
3. **Approval of the Agenda:**
   **Moved by: Shakura, seconded by: Sirkka**
   **THAT the agenda for Wednesday, November 20th, 2024, as amended, be approved.**
   **Discussion:** We now have an Outreach report from Shari. **CARRIED**

4. **Approval of the Previous Minutes:**
   **Moved by: Rainer, seconded by: Cameron**
   **THAT the Minutes of the Church Council Meeting held on October 16th, 2024, be approved.**
   **Discussion:** None. **CARRIED.**

5. **Treasurer's Report/Approval of Financial Statements**
   - The September financials were approved by email shortly after the October Council Meeting.
   - Depositing both grants has put us back on track to our target budget!
   - DARS received a very generous donation.
   - W&A Tech grant of $3,959.52 arrived and has zeroed out that balance.
   - The intern grant ($5200) arrived and was deposited, we are left with a small summer intern balance.
   - Proceeds from Oktoberfest were credited to Congregational Life in the family of funds.
   - We received a $70 cheque from ELCIC, it was deposited to the general fund.

   **Moved by: Fiona, seconded by: Sirkka**
   **THAT the October Financial Statements, be approved. Discussion:** We still have a Canada Helps donation coming in. That donor will be asked to switch to Tithe.ly. We need to get registered with Benevity so that donations coming through them get properly handled. **CARRIED**

6. **New Business:**
   a. **Appointment of Nominating Committee for Council**
   Fiona identified that the Nominating Committee members are responsible for talking to congregational members to identify who might stand for election to Council. This year Kavita's one-year term is up and Fiona's three-year term is up. Both women will stand for re-election. We can have up to 12 members.
   Council appoints Analisa & Sirkka to serve as the Nominating Committee, along with support from Pastor Ronnie.

   b. **New Proposal for DARS Warming Centre**
   DARS contacted Pastor Ronnie with a proposal to extend their Warming Centre to seven nights a week for the winter season. The discussion on this topic was held In-Camera. Shari Nelson was present for the discussion, as our liaison to DARS. Elements of her Outreach Report were included in the confidential discussion.

   Council considered input from members of the Council and a couple of members of the congregation who expressed concerns with the DARS programing and the new, 7-day-a-week proposal.

   Members of Council and Shari will conduct further research and then Rosie, Sirkka, Fiona Shari and Pastor will hold a meeting with DARS and the City of Pickering.

*Shari left the meeting after discussion of this item.*

   c. **Set Date for Budget Proposal meeting with Matthew**
   The date should be December 4 so all Council members can attend. Rosie will follow up with Bill & Matthew.

   d. **Canada Summer Jobs for 2025**
   The window is open to put in an application. David recommends we have someone to focus on marketing and communications to help promote the church in new ways.

   **Moved by: David, seconded by: Fiona**
   **THAT PLC send in an application to the Government of Canada for funding for a student to promote the church in innovative ways and that a budget of $650 be created for this position. Discussion:** None. **CARRIED**

7. **Old Business:**
   a. **Phillip Walke - tax receipt for TV and computers donated to the church - Update**
      - Phil received reimbursement for the TV and computers. Phil has now made a donation to the church.
   b. **Proposal for Lena - Update**
      - Fiona reported that she has completed the information required on the Government of Canada website to create a job offer. The registration fee will be covered by the Sievers. Now we will wait until her work permit is approved and Lena will start a more formal role working for all of us at Peace.

c. **Affirming Worship Durham – Update**
   - Last month we didn't finalize our decision about next steps with AWD. We couldn't attend the bi-annual AWD meeting today since we had other meetings. The next one will be in the spring.
   - Rosie asked for input on what we want to – do we want to be on the AWD list of affirming congregations.

     **Moved by: Fiona, Seconded by: Cameron**
     **THAT Pastor Ronnie contact Don and ask to be added to the AWD list of affirming congregations. Discussion:** None **CARRIED**

   - Sirkka plans to have Don Fry speak at the Congregational Luncheon in January. She already asked him to keep the presentation to 30 minutes. She asked Pastor to extend the invitation for January.

d. **Kindred Feasibility Study – next step – December 18**
   - They will be here December 18th to present the Feasibility Study results. Interested members of the congregation will attend.

e. **Community Conversation - After Kindred Feasibility Study**
   - defer

f. **Fundraising Proposal – Gala**
   - defer

g. **Youth Fund Raising Proposal**
   - defer

h. **Annual Congregational pictures – Update**
   - Steven is willing to be the photographer for this initiative in the Spring.
   - Cameron agreed to coordinate the schedule for people to come for photographs – this could be done via Survey Monkey and calls to ppl who don't use internet.
   - The plan is to distribute the directory digitally and print a couple of copies for people who don't use the internet.

8. **Correspondence**
   a. **None.**
9. **Reports:**
   - **Olive Branch (verbal report -Rosie)**
     - There was a meeting November 20. Deborah visited and brought reps from St Mark's church who also support Olive Branch. 2025 is the 20th Anniversary of OBFC.
     - Deborah said Mlombwa is taking on more leadership at OBFC and she will come the last week of April, 2025 to make the annual presentation. At that time she will make the pitch to the congregation to potentially to "adopt" a new child. Deborah will also be here with her family.
     - PLC will supply a written invitation for Mlombwa & Laudia to come here.
     - Deborah brought cards and earrings to gather free will donations for OBFC. Sirkka and Rosie will set them out with a donation bowl.
     - Fundraising planning will start in January

- **Technology Update (report submitted by email -David)**
  - Technology update has been moved from Old Business to Reports
  - Google analytics is up and running. A graphic report will be regular feature to track user engagement. More traffic to the site increases likelihood of new visitors to the church and enhanced rental opportunities.
  - For the past 30 days we had 158 active users visit the site, which is roughly 5 per day. The bulk of those are finding us through an organic search, rather than linking to us from a different source.
  - Links from other sources improves the sites search engine optimization 'SEO' score, so we need to consider ways to have more interconnectivity between or social media accounts, as well as have our members link/tag the church in their own posts.
  - Most views are just of the main page, and in terms of engagement, only 15% of users make it past that home screen. This suggests that there isn't enough interesting material to keep them looking deeper. Another interpretation is that the home screen isn't captivating enough for new visitors to bother to explore more. It's also possible that the home screen has the info their looking for, but nonetheless, will need to consider how we can get other page views (such as dedicated links to our rental page).
  - More data history will become available as the analytics only started in early October.
  - When searching Peace Lutheran Church, we are the top of the search list!
  - Based on maps for the area, when searching Lutheran Church, we also show up at the top, with much better reviews than other options!
  - Meanwhile, if we search more generically for churches in Pickering, we aren't featuring near the top. We are on the second search page, and the 12th ranked option, which is better than we were the last time I investigated, and we were ranking closer to 30th.
  - This is a nice improvement, and we can continue our efforts to push for the first page of search results, as that will be fundamental to getting visibility from non-Lutheran individuals looking for a new church to try.
  - We will need someone who is more dedicated full time to adding to the site and enhancing its content.

- **Property (reported submitted by email-Tapio) (Liaison Rainer)**

  *Old Items:*

  - **Fall Clean-up Day –** The weather and participation for the Oct 19th fall clean-up day was excellent. All listed task items and a few others were completed by 17 volunteers. Phil Plath trimmed off 90% of dead and dying branches from the poplar tree at the west driveway ramp. With many helpers, most of the logs were loaded into Phil's trailer & pickup and Cameron's van. 8-10 logs were stacked on the hill on the east side of the parking ramp for future pickup.

  *New items:*

  - **Abandoned & Vandalized vehicle –** A Toyota Echo with Ontario plates DASP 532 in the NW corner of the PLC upper parking lot was found with all windows broken on Sun. morning Oct 27th.

    Pastor had no record of this car registered as a renter and earliest available security videos from July 18 shows this car parked in this spot and appears to have not moved from this spot.

Tapio reported the car to the police and they came to investigate around 2:30 pm. The officer stated since the car is not reported stolen and located on private property, he was unable to have it towed away. He said that we need to contact Pickering Bylaw Enforcement.

Security video of the day before showed a male adult between 3:18 pm to 3:32 pm vandalizing the car with a long rod. He left the lot at 3:42pm heading towards Liverpool Rd. Unfortunately, it is impossible to identify the individual but it showed that he was very intoxicated.

- **"No Unauthorized Parking" Signs –** On Mon. Oct 28th, Tapio called and left a message with the supervisor of bylaw enforcement. On Thurs. Oct 31st they reported no "Private Property - No Unauthorized Parking" signs posted on the property. They were unable to impound the car due to the absence of signs. We found our existing no parking sign that is posted on a standalone pole in a cement bucket located by the NE corner of the building was so faint it was unreadable.

  Tapio purchased 3 Private Property - No Unauthorized Parking" signs at a total cost of $177 with delivery and taxes included. Jeremy posted two signs on the north side of the building and the third one at the basement entrance.

  On Mon, Nov. 4th, a bylaw officer ticketed the car and placed a 24-hour Tow Notice on it.

  On Wed. Nov. 6th, the supervisor reported the car towed away a little after midnight. He recommended either adding 3 more signs, on posts or repositioning the ones attached to the building to each parking lot entrance. He reported with parking spots on the west side of the building, we would need an additional sign in that area to enforce / tow a vehicle in the future. Tapio and Jeremy will make the necessary changes to comply.

- **Encampment & Vandalism –** We are becoming concerned with recent evidence of an encampment on the property and incidences of vandalism. For example, Shirley Fingler reported on Oct 21st that the poplar logs stacked by the parking ramp on Oct 19th had been scattered across the ramp. We found on the security video it had been done the evening before by a young male adult. He seemed to take pleasure doing this senseless and antisocial act.

  On Oct 22nd, Jeremy and Tapio witnessed an individual sleeping on the grass beside the parking ramp while they were relocating the poplar logs to the edge of the ravine.

  Along with finding a vandalized vehicle in the parking lot on Oct 27th, Tapio discovered 3 recently erected snow curb markers missing. He suspects they were used the next day for the vandalizing the abandoned vehicle.

  On Nov. 12th, Rainer discovered a tarp (typically used for encampments) in an extra recycle bin a few feet below the ravine ridge. On Sun. Nov. 17th, he and others saw this same tarp in use by an individual sleeping on it on the grass beside the parking lot ramp. At this time, we do not have an action plan and welcome any council suggestions and/directives.

- **Snow Parking Curb Markers –** Nov. 1st Tapio ordered additional snow parking curb markers to replace the missing ones at cost of $39.99 plus HST. They were assembled and installed.
- **Basement Doorbell –** Jeremy has installed an independent basement doorbell for the Fellowship Hall (FH).

- **Defibrillator/AED –** A new battery and pads were needed to replace the original ones which had expired. These were ordered at a cost of $515 plus HST. They have been installed and tested ok.
- **FH & Sunday School Storage Rooms –** Sirkka and Lena have plans to reorganize the Fellowship Hall and Sunday School storage rooms. Existing shelving in the FH storage room requires repair or replacement. Both rooms require additional shelving. The Property team will meet shortly to come up with an action plan.
- **2025 Budget –** Nov. 16th, the 2025 property budget was forwarded to the 2025 Budget Team.
- **New AA Tuesday evenings –** Rent waived. Members of the existing Friday AA group requested use of FH for Tuesday evenings. Pastor asked that some research be done on the issue of how our insurance will treat them. Results were reported back to Pastor- see Pastor's Report
- **Snow Clearing overpayment –** Tapio found and reported to Sunny that C & R Paving had sent us an extraneous invoice this year over the contracted amount to the tune of $939.70, which Sunny had paid. Sunny confirmed this overpayment and is working with them to receive reimbursement and to avoid a repeat. Unfortunately, this is the second year this happened but they caught it last year and refunded the extra payment.

- **Worship & Arts: (Rosie/Fiona/Pastor)**
  - The group met today to plan for the Advent and Christmas season.
  - We will have a service in January to welcome new members
  - Christmas Eve service at 7:00 and Christmas Day at 10:30.

- **Mutual Ministry: (verbal report -Fiona)**
  - No update.

- **Congregational Life: (report -Sirkka)**
  - Susan Metzger has joined Congregational Life and would like to spearhead Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving dinners at the church in 2025. We are blessed with so many people who are willing to contribute.

  - October 23rd: Congregational / Community lunch was attended by 33 people. Jaz did such an amazing job leading us in chair yoga. The volunteers who help in the kitchen do such a wonderful job.

  - November 17th: International Potluck lunch. It was so wonderful to see 50 people attend and many contributed food. Everyone had such a great time and the food was delicious.

  - November 16th: Rosie, Lena and Sirkka cleaned and organized the kitchen. They also organized the Sunday school storage room as best they could. Tried to work on the storage room off the Fellowship Hall. This room is used by some of the renters. We are unsure of what articles belong to which organization. We suggest that the renters' material be stored in bins and labeled.

  - November 27th: Congregational / Community Lunch
  - December 1st Advent pot luck luncheon

- December 15th: Bake and Craft sale (Everything should be priced and noting any items with nuts – no peanuts)
- January 22nd: Congregational / Community Lunch

- **Outreach – Shari Nelson**
  - *Review of the relationship with DARS at the end of the first year – some elements were part of the In Camera discussion held under New Business so are not included here:*

  - **Numbers:** The Thursdays dinners have grown from 4 or 5 on the first night to groups of anywhere from 40 to 60, including volunteers and staff. Since I don't know all the DARS staff, it is difficult to tell staff from volunteers, but since we want to grow community, all are welcome.
  - **Pantry:** I understand that the pantry was a combination of DARS and PLC and that both organizations would have access to supply immediate needs of any who came to PLC looking for food. Unfortunately, there seems to be some lack of clarity on the part of DARS volunteers(?) who have assumed full ownership of the pantry which has caused some friction with PLC members.
  - **Garden:** Although the garden this year especially was intended for using the produce to provide fresh vegetables for meals, I saw little use of these vegetables, other than tomatoes, in the meals. Some of the produce went to a local food bank so that others would have access to fresh vegetables, but the lack of use is a concern.
  - **Building use at other than agreed-upon times:** This has become an area of major concern. PLC has other renters who pay to use the space. Recently, people identifying as DARS have come in during the use by other renters. PLC welcomes *all* of our renters. Entering when the space is being used by others needs to stop for anything other than an emergency.
  - **Cleanliness**: This has also been an area of concern. Although some have done a good job of cleaning up after the meal, others are much more lackadaisical, leading to complaints by those who use the space the next day. There is some indication that some procedures around cleaning are not being followed.
  - **Meals:** I have noticed a decline in the types and quality of food being served. Mostly, the meals are meat, potatoes or rice and a salad. I'm not seeing much use of beans or lentils as a source of protein and certainly few fall vegetables such as squash, beets or sweet potatoes. To include some of these might help those who have a place to live to discover other, less expensive foods to prepare for themselves.
  - **Times of access**: Several times over the past few months, I have arrived earlier on Thursday, often finding people already being served meals
  - It is important to work out these issues before they grow into a break in the relationship. We both have a desire to feed the hungry and to welcome the stranger. We can accomplish more together when we have unity of purpose, a will to help as many as possible and a respect for the role each organization plays in doing God's work.

- **Pastor's Report**
  - It was a fairly quiet month after the bustle of September and October, no major news to report.
  - I did do one funeral at the church for an outside group on Nov. 3rd. I have another funeral coming up on Saturday.

- I worked from home for one week due to illness. Otherwise, it was business as usual for the past few weeks.

- **CHURCH SERVICES:**
  - Weekly sermon preparation, reading, writing, collegial discussions.
  - Produce/coordinate services, order of service, full and concise versions. Excel sheet for use by the Tech Team, help coordinate volunteers/worship assistants, live stream uploads and distribution, tech support, etc.
  - Music Team rehearsal each Sunday, hymn selections.
- **COMMUNICATIONS:**
  - Email, phone calls, zoom calls, texts, social media posts, visitations, newsletter/gratitude corner submission, review of Synodical and National church communications, PLC APP management, website management, etc.
- **OFFICE:**
  - Duties include financial records management/assistance, answer phones, checking mail, and distributing newsletters to congregation members, management of rental arrangements for parking and building, etc.

**10. Other Business**

- Sirkka reported that Frances from Liberia has offered to help PLC set up a women's group to be expanded to other churches over time.

**11. Closing Prayer: Rosie did the closing prayer.**

**12. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:55p.m.**

Next Regular Council Meeting **– Wednesday, December 18th, 6:00 pm via hybrid Zoom & in person model.**

***Online Votes held between Council Meetings:***

***None.***