MINUTES OF THE CHURCH COUNCIL MEETINxG
OF PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
on Wednesday March 19th, 2025 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:
Via Zoom: Rosie Lantzsch (Co-chair), Fiona Haapalehto (Secretary), Karen Bunbury, Kavita Kanavalli, Rainer Knabenschuh, David Wishart, Cameron Ylimaki, and Pastor Ronnie Smith, Sunny Wishart (Treasurer).

Regrets: Sirkka Taylor (Co-chair), Analisa Chand, Shakura Persaud,

Congregational Members: none
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 7:04pm.

2. **Opening: David** did an opening devotion & prayer. **Rosie** will do the devotional for the next meeting.

3. **Approval of the Agenda:**
   Moved by: Kavita, seconded by: Rainer
   THAT the agenda for Wednesday, March 19th, 2025, be approved.
   Discussion: none. **CARRIED**

4. **Approval of the Previous Minutes:**

   Moved by: Rainer, seconded by: Karen
   THAT the Minutes of the Church Council Meeting held on February 19th, 2025, be approved. Discussion: None. **CARRIED.**

   Moved by: Rainer, seconded by: Karen
   THAT the Minutes of the Special Church Council Meeting held on February 23rd, 2025, be approved. Discussion: None. **CARRIED.**

5. **Treasurer's Report/Approval of Financial Statements**
   - New fund will be set up in March for Outreach Lunches under Family of Funds – Special Purpose Funds.
   - Pastor pension and benefits have increased a bit as ELCIC has added the adjustments to the annual wage increase.

- Software and subscriptions were charged for the Adobe renewal was $623, which brings us way over the annual budget. Pastor Ronnie will check if the Adobe renewal was entitled to a discount through TechSoup.
- We have a stale dated cheque sitting in our accruals, written to Zara Bakhtiar for $120.23 in February 2023. It was categorized as property maintenance reserve; it was for our blueprints repair. This accrued amount will be removed from our books as the cheque is now stale dated.
- CLWR moved offices in 2024, 2 of our quarterly cheques have been returned (Sept and Dec 2024), they were re-mailed 2 weeks ago with the updated address, however the Sept one will be stale dated, will keep an eye to make sure they receive these.

Moved by: Kavita, seconded by: Rainer

THAT the February Financial Statements be approved. Discussion: We have a delinquent renter. Rosie followed up with them today. They made a partial payment today and will pay the remainder of the outstanding amount at the end of March. This was a special circumstance. As a rule, Pastor Ronnie reviews rental income from a statement he receives from the Financial Secretary in order to identify problems for follow up. **CARRIED**

6. **New Business:**
   a. **Redo Counting from Outreach Lunch**
      - (Rosie) Jeremy has amended the donation slips that the counters fill out so there is a place for the Outreach Lunch donations. The first donations came in March 9.
   b. **Funding for Outreach Lunch**
      - This fund will likely be in the red until we get more donations that cover the start-up costs.
   c. **Digital Sign**
      - Rosie asked who is following up after this issue was raised. At present no one is working on it. It was suggested that we ask Sirkka or the Property Team to get some estimates for our next Council meeting.
   d. **Rodrigues Kinavuidi (vehicle)**
      - Rodrigues' car was parked in the lot last year with Pastor Ronnie's permission. We did not have the license plate recorded and it was there for many months so when it was vandalized, we had it towed to the impound lot, not realizing who it belonged to. Rodrigues lost his work tools, clothes and important papers.
      - Elizabeth and Pastor Ronnie are working with Rodrigues to help outfit him with work tools, boots, etc. Funds are coming from the Discretionary Fund and private donors.
   e. **Interim Congregational Redevelopment Services Advisor-Katja Brittain**
      - Katja has replaced Jennifer Hoover at the Synod.
      - Pastor Ronnie feels she is an asset to the Synod as she previously worked with Kindred Works.

7. **Old Business:**
   a. **Summer Jobs – 2025 (report by email – David W)**
      - Pastor Ronnie reported the office that processes these grants may be in disarray with the impending election. He has called but was not able to get a status report.

- Last year we didn't receive confirmation of the grant until the end of April. If there is a similar delay this year we need to be ready to move quickly when we do hear back.
- This job is intended for the person to work on our website.

b. Proposal for Voluntary Parish Worker -Lena - Update

- No further update.

c. DARS Warming Centre - update

- No further update.

8. Correspondence

a. none

9. Reports:

- **Church Redevelopment (Steven/Kavita)**
  - A questionnaire went out today from this group to the members of PLC to seek input on the proposal.
  - Steven will follow up with Katja Brittain.
- **Olive Branch (Rosie)**
  - Deborah is coming with the family on the Sunday after Easter. Mlombwa and Laudia cannot come due to visa limitations.
  - We hope to have a Potluck ++ when they come.
  - There will be a short presentation on each of the four Sundays prior to Deborah's visit. Deborah will do a short video for the third Sunday presentation.
  - The Gala is on May 3rd. Everyone is encouraged to buy a ticket and attend.
- **Technology Update (David)**
  - For the past 28 days we had 164 active users visit the site, which is roughly 6 per day. The bulk of those are finding us through an organic search (132), rather than linking to us from a different source (75).
  - Links from other sources improves the sites search engine optimization 'SEO' score, so we continue to 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.
  - Total page views of our main page were 237 versus the next best page (events) at 38
  - Most views are just of the main page, and in terms of engagement, only 16% 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).
  - In particular, when looking at SEO and improved engagement, we should try to get page links to other pages on our site besides the main page. For example, sharing the events page on a person's own Facebook profile.

  - When searching Peace Lutheran Church, we continue to be 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, meaning if someone who isn't Lutheran was looking for a new church, we wouldn't be one of the first options they see. This caps our growth potential outside our core denomination.
- We are on the second search page, and the 10th ranked option, same as the previous period.
- We would need to knock Pickering Community Baptist Church, or Bayfair Baptist Church to page two in order to claim a top search ranking.
- According to Yelp, we are the 18th best Church in Pickering, ranking in between St. Isaac Jogues Church and Doxa Pentecostal Tabernacle.
- We continue to need someone who is more dedicated full time to adding to the site and enhancing its content.
- Comments – Karen suggested we dress up the church to promote rentals for weddings, etc. She also suggested to post pictures of the outside of the church when the gardens are in full array.

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

Old Items:

Paper & Plastic Supplies – As the Warming Center has been open most evenings, the year-to-date consumption of toilet paper, paper towels, compost bin liners and garbage bags is much higher than previous years for the same period.

The popularity of the Outreach Lunch and DARS Thursday suppers are also consuming supplies regularly.

Boiler room floor flooding – since the last meeting, there have been 3 re-occurrences of flooding but these have been mild in nature. Rainer, Jeremy and Tapio have each had to mop up a quarter to a half-bucket of water. The property team continues to monitor.

Once the Warming Center shuts down at the end of the month, the property team anticipates the re-occurrences of this flooding will be minimal until the Warming Center opens again in the fall.

New Items:

Dump Run – on March 12th Jeremy and Tapio moved old shelving broken tables, chairs and other items from the storage room clean up and hauled them to the dump.

Do-Not-Enter Barrier – the wooden barrier that blocked access to the old wooden stairs by the westside of the church was knocked down by a vandal sometime last week. People have been seen to be using that route to the lower parking lot instead of using the paved ramp. The property team have identified three options – burying the old stairs with earth, erect a new barrier or replace with concrete stairs. Discussions are continuing to decide on the best option.

Parking line painting – Rainer has acquired equipment (for half price!) to repaint the pavement markings in the parking lot. This will be scheduled once we have the paint and the stencils for the wheelchair symbols, reserved spaces and no parking areas.

With our own equipment we can carry out the project with minimal inconvenience to our parkers. *Karen has offered to help get a good price from her contact at Home Depot.*

Fernie Works (FW) – Tapio received and will accept the FW renewal estimate for 12 biweekly lawn care which includes mowing, blowing, trimming, bagging and debris removal. This 2025 estimate is $1,282.50 with a pre-payment discount of 5% and it is another 5% lower than last year's. Note- FW does not charge GST since they are a registered charity.

Spring Cleanup – The Spring Clean Up will take place on Saturday April 26th, rain date May 3rd.

Minor maintenance completed – broken basement door closure mechanism replaced, new locks for kitchen cupboards installed, replaced broken transparent enclosure box for PLC Fire Safety Plan installed and the boiler thermostat cover was replaced.

- **Worship & Arts: (Rosie/Fiona/Pastor)**
  - Meeting was held March 19, 2025.
  - Eternity candle has been reinstated.
  - Pastor has ordered palms for Palm Sunday.
  - There will be a 2-hr prayer vigil after the Maundy Thursday service. This service will be held at 6:30 to provide more time.
  - There will be a special healing service on June 1st.

- **Mutual Ministry: (Fiona)**
  - No report this month.

- **Peace Outreach Program (Kavita/Sue)**
  - Rosie, Sirkka and Fiona met with Sue on March 13 to discuss the way forward. Sue and Kavita submitted the following report.
    - March 15 was a great day. We had 10 patrons and we sent a lunch home for a woman who was unable to come due to her disability.
    - On average we have 9 patrons each week. The average cost per lunch is $43.00 a week.
    - Our volunteer pool is 12 (In the next few weeks I will have people away so will need to ensure I have coverage on Saturdays)
    - Sue is away on holiday April 2nd-17th. Riya and Elizabeth have offered to cover the kitchen April 5th and 12th.
    - Sue and Riya have completed the Food-handlers course. Certificates will be posted
    - Sue will create a HACCP report where we can monitor our control points.
    - There are a couple of small items for the kitchen that should be purchased to ensure we are compliant.
    - Sue is working with Pastor Ronnie on a grant to fund the outreach lunch and hope to have it complete and ready to send this week.
    - Fiona is looking into a first Aid course for our volunteers. Her daughter is a trainer so she is going to ask if she would be willing to provide training for the team.

- **Congregational Life: (Sirkka)**
    - February 23rd: AGM and Potluck

- February 26th: Congregational Lunch was attended by 36 people. Shakura made chicken chow mien, Susan made a green salad, Sirkka a caesar salad, Lynn brought buns and butter. Lena, Rosie, Sirkka and Janet supplied desserts. Elizabeth and Ruth invited Reverend Marilyn Metcalfe to speak to us about the power of prayer, which was relaxing and interesting. She showed us the Five Finger Prayer by Pope Francis. She has offered to bring over her portable labyrinth once in a while for a spiritual activity.
- This month Don Fry from Affirming Worship Durham, will present.
- March 4th: Shrove Tuesday was attended by 30 people. We enjoyed pancakes, sausages, ham and peameal bacon. We are blessed to have so many people who are willing to volunteer.

March 26th	Congregational Lunch
April 20th	Easter breakfast Potluck
April 23rd	Congregational Lunch
May 28th	Congregational Lunch
June 25th	Congregational Lunch
June 29th	Strawberry Social
July 27th	Sunday Sundae
August 24th	Watermelon Party
September 14th	Yard Sale
September 24th	Congregational Lunch
October	Oktoberfest (maybe)
October 22nd	Congregational Lunch
November 16th	International Potluck
November 25th	Congregational Lunch
November	Advent Potluck (Rosie to organize)
December 14th	Bake and Craft Sale

Possible other functions are a BBQ, car wash and a silent auction.

- **Outreach: (Shari Nelson)**
  - Shari is attending the DARS Thursday dinners. She has noticed a decline in attendance which she suspects may be due to a new shelter in Whitby. Clients want to arrive early to get a bed. Travel time might also be a factor.
  - At these dinners there have been some disagreements with DARS staff, with accusations of dishonesty. Shari will follow up more.
  - Shari has not received any further information from Mansoura about her mother and brother.
  - She complimented the organizers of the Saturday Outreach lunches.

- **Pastor's Report**
  - **OPEN DOOR, OPEN BOOK:** Started a new weekly online social/Bible study group on Tuesday, nights at 7pm. It is a casual drop in to check in with friends and to discuss the intersection of faith and life. We've had two sessions so far and they've gone well.

  - **BISHOP'S RETREAT:** The retreat went fairly well. It was a more relaxed environment than in years past which I think reflects the contrast in styles between the two leaders. Bishop Jason Zinko from the Manitoba & Northern Ontario Synod led us through a

number of workshops intended to really identify the values and purpose of the church in its present context. He did a great job walking us through the modules.

- The only real downside was that it was one day shorter than usual and it didn't quite achieve that retreat feel as in years past. Most people felt this way and the Bishop has already committed to adding the additional day back into next year's retreat.

- **LENT:** Kicked off Lent with an Ash Wednesday service, including the imposition of Ashes. We have ordered the same quantity of palms for Palm Sunday this year. I have asked Analisa to preach on Maundy Thursday and Arnold to preach on Good Friday.

- **MISSION GRANT:** In support of our Saturday lunch outreach ministry, I have submitted an application for a mission grant with the Eastern Synod Mission Committee for the amount of $9400. I Don't expect we'll get the full amount but it doesn't hurt to ask. I will forward you a copy of the application for your reference. I having been attending some of the lunches.

- **INSTALLATION OF COUNCIL**: Our new council was installed on Sunday, March 16th during our weekly worship service.

- **COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR:** It was so great to partner with Shannon and Durham Youth Services for this event. Certainly, it was great to help combat youth homelessness with reliable respected partners. It also brought great awareness to our church and we had a great team from Peace show up to walk. I'm looking forward to deepening this relationship moving forward. I have had some preliminary discussions with Shannon about the possibility of hosting a youth specific warming centre next winter. Stay tuned.

10. Other Business

Friends and Members listing from AGM

- Kavita created an online form to collect personal data. A notice went out to members. She has collected names, addresses phone numbers and emails from 65 members.
- Ronnie will send out another notice asking people to fill out the form.
- It will help get everyone's permission to share their data.

11. Closing Prayer: David did the closing prayer.

12. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Next Regular Council Meeting **– Wednesday, April 16th, 7:00 pm via hybrid Zoom & in person model.**

Online Votes held between Council Meetings:

None