

**Desert Cross Lutheran Church
Council Meeting Minutes
December 15, 2025**

Minutes taken by: Marie Ihlefeld
Meeting start time: 6:31 PM
Meeting end time: 8:16 PM

Attendees:

Council - Present	Absent	Pastors/Staff - Present
Gail Dempsey		Pr. Andrea Cain
Vicki English		Pr. Thadd Book
Brent Borchers		Doug Bjotvedt
Anna Sion		
Mari Johnson		
Marie Ihlefeld		
Tony Tainter		
Sue Eberle		
MaryBeth LaMont		
Mark Farrell		

Devotions: Mark Farrell

Presentation from Gilbert Refresh Team – Brian and Dana

Approval of December Agenda:

- **First:** Gail Dempsey
- **Second:** Mari Johnson
- **Unanimously Approved – Motion Carried**

Approval of November Minutes:

- **First:** Gail Dempsey
- **Second:** Mari Johnson
- **Unanimously Approved – Motion Carried**

Team Updates:

1. Director of Operations and Property Report: Doug Bjotvedt

- Another \$50K gift was given to the Memorial Garden for a total of \$70K. (\$20,000 in October and \$50,000 in November). There was also a \$50,000 donation in the fall for IT & audio/visual upgrades. General Fund Giving is still down and needs more. Thankful for the designated/restricted gifts for upgrades and special projects. \$105,000 of restricted gifts moves to 2026. Don't have a final cost for the Memorial Garden upgrades. Fountain fixes have begun & new tile looks great! Fountain tiling should be completed today and water will be on Friday.
- **Tempe Land Sale Update:** Land sale to close in late January – was not included in the 2026 budget.
- Gilbert Refresh Account currently at \$6,894 & adding another \$304.97 left from golf tournament.
- The Refresh Account is currently part of Restricted Gifts in the Asset Report --- requesting Doug to add a line to the Asset Report for the Gilbert Refresh Account.

2. Financial Committee Report: Brent Borchers

- Finances look good, special gifts are higher compared to last year. The audit was great and everything was in order. Writing a letter/summary for the annual report. Financial update going to Wendy.
- Need two tellers a week for counting at 9:30am on Wednesdays. Requesting pastors make announcements at the end of service. Looking for 10-12 volunteers for the teller group.
- Hoping December finances are like last year --- Could be \$25,000 less due to a gift requested and received earlier this year to help with finances at the end of the summer.

Vote to Approve Financial Report:

- **First:** Tony Tainter
- **Second:** MaryBeth LaMont
- **Unanimously Approved – Motion Carried**

3. President's Report Vicki English

- **Budget Meeting Recap:** It was difficult to get 50 people for the Budget Meeting. Kids connect in Gilbert unfortunately conflicts often with congregational meetings. There were some audio problems with the stream. Questions came up about the mortgage. There is about \$769,000 left on the mortgage. The interest rate is 3.875%. The mortgage will reach maturity in 2035 (may pay off sooner). We are currently paying \$91,560 per year.

4. Pastor Reports:

- **Pr. Andrea:**

- We are “Adventing” at Desert Cross! Our December theme is “Journey to the Manger” as we reflect on the story of our Savior’s birth beginning with the census in Rome, to the temple in Jerusalem with Zechariah, to the Annunciation in Nazareth, and to the manger in Bethlehem. This Advent is action packed with children’s Christmas pageants at both campuses, and special musical events at both campuses. We had our pageant in Tempe with about 20 kids participating plus Shannon, our director, and the teachers and the congregation – very special moments for all! Christmas Eve is around the corner, and we anticipate very special evenings with candlelight services at both campuses.
- We continue to grow in Tempe with a growing group of young families who are inviting their friends and several baptisms on the books or soon to be. It is exciting to see the energy and the congregation growing on Sunday mornings.
- We brought back Advent Wed soup suppers in Tempe, and it has been a really popular event filling the fellowship hall and brimming with lots of soup and desserts! We’ve enjoyed Holden Evening Prayer and hearing spiritual pilgrimage stories of our members.
- Lots of pastoral care happening with grieving families, planning memorial services, and making hospital visits. This time of year is especially hard and it’s a privilege to support families.
- Excited to be helping lead the memorial garden team. This is a ministry of Desert Cross, and we want to present and maintain a reverent and beautiful place to house the remains of our loved ones. Thanks to some member donations, we can make the necessary upgrades and renovations. There is new tile on the fountain which should solve our problems there. Next up is irrigation, new trees, landscaping pavers, lighting, etc.
- This Advent I am very grateful for our faith community and all the ways you serve, share God’s love, and bring hope and peace to our church, community, and the world. I can’t wait to see how God will be working through us in 2026!

- **Pr. Thadd**

- Ditto – Advent has been fun, and enjoyed gathering for Wednesday night meals for Pastor classes and Advent.
- The Cantata was wonderful; there was a great turnout and tasty cookies to take home. Pastor Steve attended and members from Love of Christ Lutheran Church were in attendance.
- The Christmas Pageant is coming this Sunday in the middle half of service.
- Several Baptisms in December with two on Saturday night. Saturday night service was filled with large families for the baptisms of a 2-yr old and 5-yr old.
- I-Help needs donations of gift cards, socks or cookies. There is a collection basket or drop them off at the office with Wendy Williams. Gift cards should be \$25 from Target, Walmart or McDonalds.

5. **Endowment:** Vicki No Update

6. **Gilbert Chamber Report:** Mari Johnson/Tony Tainter

- The Cantata was great. There were 6 people that joined the Cantata from Tempe. Frederick Chao, a member of the Phoenix Symphony, played amazing cello pieces. The children's play is coming up Sunday.
- There is \$304.97 to be posted to the Refresh account from the golf tournament.
- Hymn Sing is planned for March 1st from 4-6pm. Propose funds collected from the Hymn Sing be assigned to the Refresh fundraiser. Hymn Sing will be a free-will offering.

7. **Stewardship** Pr. Thadd Received more pledges this year than last year & many new ones. Must double check the numbers with Doug.

8. **Project Updates:** Vicki English No updates

9. **Program (Staff) Reports/Questions** No Questions

10. **Old Business:** Vicki

- **Refresh Discussion:** Commitment cards look good & suggest adding a line for a phone number to the card. Propose matching to be done by phase.

Move to have the Gilbert Refresh Team present Phase 1, Phase 2 & Phase 3 minus the kitchen and nursery changes to the congregation at town halls prior to the congregational vote at the February 2026 Annual Meeting.

(After subtracting the kitchen & nursery changes, remaining items in phase 3 could be moved to phase 2, if the Refresh team desires.)

- **First:** Brent Borchers
- **Second:** Mari Johnson
- **Unanimously Approved – Motion Carried**

- The Congregation will vote on the Gilbert Refresh Capital Campaign and vote to approve a match for Phase 1 at the February 22nd 2026 Annual Meeting.
- Meet with Brian and Dana to get town halls on the calendar for January or early February. Vicki is reaching out to them.

11. **New Business** Vicki

- **Expectations:** Reviewed Welcome to Council Roles and Responsibilities document. We can add to it.
- **Prep for Congregational Meeting in February / Nominating Committee:** February 22nd is the Annual Meeting at 1pm. We will need to select the nominating committee. Anna will head up the nominating committee & they will

be searching for candidates for treasurer, Vice President & 2-3 at large members. We will also be selecting volunteers for the Synod Assembly.

- **January Agenda:** Please add the Property and Visioning committee to the agenda going forward. Council should set the committee – we need representation from both sites and open minds exploring our total future vision.
- Borderlands Produce Rescue only takes prior orders in December – no cash pick up line. The next distribution is coming up December 20th.

Prayer Concerns & Praises were shared

Closing Prayer: Pr. Thadd

Adjournment:

- **First:** Tony Tainter
- **Second:** Mari Johnson
- **Unanimously Approved**