

**Desert Cross Lutheran Church
Council Meeting Minutes
May 18, 2026**

Minutes taken by: Marie Ihlefeld

Meeting start time: 7:02 PM

Meeting end time: 8:20 PM

Attendees:

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

Devotions: Anna Sion

Approval of May Agenda

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

Approval of April Minutes

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

Team Updates:

1. Director of Operations and Property Report: Doug Bjotvedt

- **Tempe Land Sale Update:** Still need an affidavit for the land sale minutes. The lender wants to know what the plan is for the money from the land sale. The Congregation approved last August the money would be spent as follows: 10% to Mission and Outreach, pay off remainder of current ELCA loan for A/C's & remaining goes into investment fund for matching capital expenses that are approved by the congregation.
- **Any Capital Campaign Fund Updates:** Have the Gilbert Refresh pledge cards, they are not entered yet. There is a significant amount being pledged.
- **Financial Update:** Down \$22,000 In April – expenses over revenue & down \$60,000 year to date in expense over revenue. General fund giving is down, attendance is up but giving is flat. Still positive cash flow due to money for restricted projects. Month to month is a struggle & we usually catch up in December.
- **Procedure/Process for starting a Capital Campaign:** Discussing the difference between designated funds and a capital campaign. Designated gifts for restricted projects are budgeted for & budget is approved by the congregation. A capital campaign is separate from the budget & approved by the congregation. We need a process for kick-starting & running a capital campaign. The Constitution says Council is responsible for management and future growth plans for the church. The first step is going to Pastor Andrea (Senior Pastor) to discuss kicking off a capital campaign. Any grant requests need to be approved by the Pastors. Doug has HR policy manuals – may be information in there.

2. Financial Committee Report: Brent Borchers

- As of March/April we are ~\$60,000 down in general giving over last year. About \$90,000 down in total revenue year to date vs last year. There is money in the bank for projects.
- Still awaiting closing of the land sale, Gilbert Refresh capital campaign may have to wait longer for matching due to delay. Already \$35,000 in Gilbert Refresh account & only have to raise another \$70,000.

Vote to Approve Financial Report:

- **First:** Tony Tainter
- **Second:** Mari Johnson
- **Unanimously Approved – Motion Carried**

3. President's Report Vicki English

- Get to know each other – We all shared how long we have been members of Desert Cross, which campus do we usually attend & what is our favorite ice cream flavor.

4. Pastor Reports:

- **Pr. Andrea: May 18, 2026 --- Senior Pastor Report**

- May 2026 is off to a thriving start in worship with so many special blessings, prayers, and litanies to celebrate and honor milestones like graduation, confirmation, and end of school year thank you's to teachers and volunteers, new member and council member installations, as well as national holidays like Mother's Day and Memorial Day. May at Desert Cross is "AMayzing!"
- We are so thankful for our recent record-breaking, shortest-ever Election meeting where we said farewell and thank you to our outgoing council/chamber members who served their terms faithfully, Joy Petroff, Anna Sion and Brent Borchers, and where we elected those who said "yes" to serving as our new Treasurer, Sharon Bucher, and our new Vice-President, Sue Smith as well as chamber outreach co-chairs, Margaret Roush-Meier and Claudia Huss. We welcome Sharon and Sue to council leadership and look forward to serving with you! I am thankful for each of you on Council, and we couldn't accomplish our important mission in the community and world without you.
- Liturgical Art dedication in Tempe – a member of the meditation group who is an artist donated a beautiful painting that he created titled "Liminal Pause." It is liturgical art at its finest and is installed in the back of the sanctuary with an explanation sheet about its meaning and focus leading us into a focus on God's grace and mercy. We unveiled and dedicated the painting to God in worship on Sat. April 18 & Sun. April 19. Thanks be to God!
- Memorial Garden upgrades – thanks to private Desert Cross donors, things are moving forward with repairing and upgrading the memorial garden to provide a more reverential and comfortable experience for those whose loved ones are interred in the columbarium. This is a ministry of Desert Cross that enables us to serve people from baptism through death, and we are grateful to provide this holy ground as a final resting place. Lola Peterson is leading the charge, and I told her a few months ago that it was time to move forward on this year's long dream, and we worked together to pave the way with a new memorial garden team – special thanks to Mark Farrell, Shelley Mardany, Paul & Cheryl Schmidtke. We creatively problem solved the perennial fountain issues, and it is now in good working order and newly tiled – beautifully representing the waters of baptism and Jesus' living water! Soon ground will be breaking the week of May 26th to pour the concrete forms for shade sails to be installed in early June. What a blessing for shade and protection in the memorial garden which will soon look more like an actual garden!
- GC Synod Assembly will be held at Love of Christ, Mesa June 12-13. We are thankful for our 4 congregational delegates who will attend with the

pastors to do the important annual business of the church and synod while building community and connecting outside of our church doors.

- We are excited to see movement and momentum with the Refresh campaign in Gilbert and give thanks to all the donors so far that will help make this dream come true. Our Gilbert worship leader, Keziah Miner, is moving to TX so we will need to conduct a worship leader search. Joni is helping get the process started.
- Together with God leading us, we can do so much to share God's love! Thank you for shining the light of Christ into our community and world!
- **Pr. Thadd:**
 - Pastor Class Wednesday night is going really well. Great conversations around books of the bible we don't spend as much time with – already halfway through the class.
 - There was a great confirmation ceremony for four students in Gilbert. They talked about their faith as teenagers & were very brave sharing their faith statements with the congregation.
 - A New member class took place last month & a lot of the new members are already involved in the church.
 - The Feed My Starving Children event had a great turnout. Denise McClellan does an excellent job organizing this event.

5. Endowment: Vicki English Nothing new from Endowment

6. Gilbert Chamber Report: Mari Johnson/Tony Tainter

- Confirmation went really well & the kids did a great job. Beautiful cake for confirmation.
- Thankful for & very excited about all the commitment cards coming in for Gilbert Refresh.
- Wendy has the first draft of the business cards done & they will be reviewing it.
- Large items (like furniture) are being dumped in the garbage dumpsters at Gilbert. Doug has gotten them cleaned out & also trimmed up a tree. Chamber approved getting "No Trespassing" signs added to the front gate of the Dumpsters

7. Stewardship Pr. Thadd

- Commitment Sunday is Reformation Sunday at the end of October. Weekend of October 24th and 25th

8. Project Updates: Vicki English

- **Memorial Garden Update:** Pr. Andrea covered the Memorial Garden update in her report. The work is being done with restricted donations from a member.

9. Program (Staff) Reports/Questions: No questions

10. Old Business: Vicki English

- **Gilbert Refresh Capital Campaign:** Letters have gone out with pledge cards and pledge cards are coming in.
- **Golf Tournament:** Reviewed the Golf Tournament Flyer. Gary Balliet proposed to council that the proceeds from the Golf Tournament would go to The Children's Home Project. The Children's Home Project website will be added to the Golf tournament Flyer.

Motion to Approve the Golf Tournament flyer and the tournament proceeds going to the Children's Home Project

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

- Congregational Meeting Minutes Review

Motion to Approve Elections Meeting minutes and Annual Meeting minutes to be added to the Annual Report.

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

11. New Business Vicki English

- Council Installation 5/30 & 5/31
- Looking for more volunteers to help with Saturday night worship services. Check if any of the youth can help. Gilbert has gotten 2 more volunteers for hospitality.

Prayer Concerns & Praises were shared

Closing Prayer: Pr. Thadd

Adjournment:

- **First:** MaryBeth LaMont
- **Second:** Brent Borchers
- **Unanimously Approved**