Desert Cross Lutheran Church
Council Meeting Minutes
September 21, 2026

Minutes taken by: Marie Ihlefeld
Meeting start time: 7:01 PM
Meeting end time: 8:12 PM

Attendees:

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

Devotions: Mark Farrell

Approval of September Agenda:

- **First:** Vicki English
- **Second:** Tony Tainter
- **Unanimously Approved – Motion Carried**

Approval of August Minutes: (with numbers corrected for ELCA (A/C) loan amount & remaining amount from land sale in the financial update)

- **First:** Vicki English
- **Second:** Tony Tainter
- **Unanimously Approved – Motion Carried**

Team Updates:

1. **Director of Operations and Property Report** Doug Bjotvedt

- Monthly and YTD income vs expenses are all in the red at the end of Q3 going into Q4. Even the adjusted YTD (with carry-over of restricted funds for projects) is now negative. The model is currently projecting a 50K loss for this year. Running almost 100k below budget. We try to break even on expenses and income each year & are always below budget. In Q4 we are back to regular programming & building excitement at Desert Cross.
- There was a $50,000 donation to the Tempe parking lot. The Tempe parking lot account is now broken out into its own line item in the monthly financial report.
- **Land Sale:** Doug has been calling every week & agreement is still waiting on the mayor's desk for a signature. No issues with the City of Tempe. Neighbors complained about overgrown trees on the Tempe campus, so they have been trimmed in the last 2 months. The new fire panel has been installed & the Fire Marshall is happy. Years ago, a water grant was applied for with the City of Tempe, but it would require planting 110 trees, so that did not happen.
- The mortgage rate has increased from 3.875% to 7.375% for the 5-yr ARM. Got a better rate last time & new rate is currently below market rates. This works out to be about $12,000 more per year (~$1000 more per month). Once the land sale is complete and the A/C loan is paid off that will save about $800 per month in cash flow. If the market rates decrease, we can approach them to try and get a lower rate.

2. **Financial Committee Report:** Sharon Bucher
    - **Treasurers' Report:** Proud of Gary Balliet for all his great work on the Golf tournament & thanks to everyone who participated. $4,500 has been sent to The Children's Home Project from the golf tournament fundraiser. The final net proceeds are still being calculated from the fundraiser. A representative from The Children's Home Project (Jenny Kast) is speaking to the congregation over a couple of weekends and the golf course is already booked by Gary Balliet for next year's tournament. The Tempe parking lot has a $50,000 donation.

Vote to Approve Financial Report:

- **First:** Gail Dempsey
- **Second:** Sue Eberle
- **Unanimously Approved – Motion Carried**

3. **President's Report** MaryBeth LaMont
    - Tempe Parking Lot Committee is getting ready to get going. The committee will present information to the congregation at the December Budget meeting. The committee will present to Council at our November 16th monthly meeting.
    - Thank you to Mari for submitting a form to the Endowment Committee for red hymnals for Gilbert. Thanks, too, to Pastor Andrea for solving the mystery of why Gilbert didn't have any (they were never ordered and at the time, not wanted/needed).

- We have several meetings coming up in October and November. The first one is scheduled for Tuesday, October 13 at 6:00 pm (note date change) in Tempe. MaryBeth will host this meeting at her home. This is for the executive team only. (MB, Sue S., Sharon, Marie, Vicki, and Pastor Andrea. Pastor Thadd is invited to attend as well.) The Finance Committee meets on Monday, October 12th, and we need input from that meeting to discuss at the Executive meeting.
- October 19 will be our regular Council meeting at 7:00 pm in Gilbert. Monday, November 2 will be a special Council meeting (everyone) for the budget presentation. This will be at 6:00 pm in Tempe in the Fellowship Hall. Monday, November 16 will be our regular Council meeting at 7:00 pm in Tempe.
- I am working on a sign-up schedule for the Holiday Craft Festival and will bring it to our October meeting.

4. **Team Report Questions:**
    - **Endowment/Gilbert Chamber/Stewardship**
        - Endowment: No Update
        - Stewardship: Commitment Sunday is coming October 25th. There will be presentations from the Stewardship Team and a letter is set to go out. There will be a children's message for stewardship & Vicki has names of more potential members for the Stewardship team.
        - Gilbert Chamber:
            - Golf Tournament 09/12
            - Trunk of Treat 10/24
            - Holiday Market 11/14
            - Outreach team advised they will have a Thanksgiving food drive.
            - Joe Weningartz, our property management representative, advised the 2 signs that were placed on Lindsey, and the corner of Lindey and Pecos a few months ago have been removed. The frames have been damaged, the actual signs are ok, but the frames need to be replaced. Since this has happened a few times already during the recent storms, it's been decided to wait until after our monsoon season is over to replace them
            - Carolyn has scheduled the Hymn Sing for February 28th, 2027 – it will be a free will donation

5. **Pastor Reports:**

    Pr. Thadd:
    - Fall programming is starting up. Sunday school has started & bibles were presented to first graders – there were a lot of kids. Shannon does a great job with the wrapping and the presentation. The Adventure Bibles are awesome.
    - Great teacher retention this year & lots of Sunday School kids. The Pencil event at Tempe was great – thank you Shannon!

- The Golf tournament was excellent – Pr. Thadd was one of the golfers. The new course this year was good for amateurs & money raised goes to The Children's Home Project. Jenny Kast for The Children's Home Project spoke at all three services & traveled to Honduras in between. 2 weeks of hunger jars was collected for The Children's Home Project. Thank you to all who donated through the Hunger Jar. We are curious what the total was from the hunger jar? Check if we can get an update in the Friday email blast of the total raised from the golf tournament from Gary Balliet once the numbers are finalized.
- Working with the Refresh Team to start the project – the altar improvements will start first. Would like a quick update with pictures at the December congregation meeting. Brian Riensche travels often for work & is working with the contractors to get started.

6. **Project Updates:** Sue S. No update

7. **Staff Reports/Questions:** No questions

8. **Old Business:** Sue Smith/Vicki English
   - **Cookbooks** Printer is getting pricing order in bulk to sell at the Holiday Market November 14th in Gilbert. Youth will be selling hot dogs for the youth trip at the Holiday Market
     Vote to Approve funds going toward the Desert Cross youth group for the 2027 ELCA National Youth Gathering:
     - **First:** Sharon Bucher
     - **Second:** Mari Johnson
     - **Unanimously Approved – Motion Carried**

9. **New Business:** Sue Smith
   - December Council Meeting would be December 21st, four days before Christmas. All agreed to move the council meeting to Tuesday December 15th. Monday evening December 14th is the Finance team meeting.
   - Joyful Noises is held in Suite 104 in Gilbert. There is no changing table for the babies and toddlers. There are chemicals sitting on a janitorial cart in the bathroom – not childproof. Need a cabinet or locking janitorial cart for chemicals & a changing table. Follow up with Denise Viker.
   - Hospice of the Valley gave a great presentation at Desert Cross that was well attended

Prayer Concerns & Praises were shared

Closing Prayer: Pr. Thadd

Adjournment:

- **First:** Mari Johnson

- **Second:** Tony Tainter
- **Unanimously Approved**