

Congregation Assembly Minutes—Jan 21,2024

1. Governance Board (GB) Chair, Todd Wegman, opened the Congregational Assembly on Sunday Jan 21, 2024, at 3:35pm
2. Elder, Nancy Olsen, led the opening devotion and prayer.
3. **Attendance:** 50 attended in person. Quorum required: 44 voting members present (20% of 217 voting members). Quorum achieved.
4. **Minutes** from Sep 17, 2024 Congregational Assembly were provided online. Friendly typo amendments were provided. Cheryl Lee moved that the minutes be approved as amended. Motion seconded no further discussion. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.
5. **Vision statement** was read in unison led by Todd Wegman (see PowerPoints)
6. **Ministry Action Plan** was presented by Brenda Petito (See PowerPoints)
7. **Call Committee update:** Robin Miliner provided update. 98 surveys were received, and the committee is in process of analyzing data. Exit interview with Pastor Peter will be conducted this week. 8 nominations for pastor candidates were received. These will not be published as some may be eliminated by District President for various reasons and other names may be added. Cheryl Lee asked if milestones are being met and the answer was yes. Joe Murchison asked the congregation to be committed to praying daily for the Call committee and the Call process. Someone asked what the target date is to get the Congregational packet to the District President. Robin answered, “end of March.” Robin asked that the congregation be patient with the Committee and to trust the process. Todd thanked the entire committee for their dedication and effort and the important work they are doing.
8. **Pastor’s report:** Associate Pastor Flahn provided update about his work with the staff and lay leaders in various ministries. He has been working with Pastor Kampia and Pastor Diefenthaler, developing preaching schedule. He also shared that he is working with Tracy Bowman to work on small groups. He has increased visits to members in need. He also expressed the joy and encouragement he has working with Open Arms children especially for chapel and morning devotions when he is able to participate. He has begun attending Circuit meetings and has been encouraged by the other pastors. Pastor Flahn is organizing a mission trip to Liberia after Easter. He expressed the need for prayer during this transition time.
9. **Elder’s report:** Rene Stein, head Elder, shared the first ever Elders’ report at a Congregational Assembly. She mentioned that the last few months have been very challenging during this pastoral vacancy as Elders have assumed additional duties in supervision, education, the Call process, visitation and especially worship. They have prepared a manual for visiting pastors. An elder is assigned to each service to insure the volunteers are in place or to fill a gap as necessary. We hope you have not noticed all of this, but rather Sunday mornings are still running seamlessly to all worshippers. There are many needs so please consider volunteering to serve during our worship services.
10. **Open Arms:** Director, Becci Stewart, updated the congregation on Opens Arms activities and events. There are currently 131 children enrolled and OA achieved Maryland Excels Level 4 Certification. When Pastors Josh, Peter and DCM Hannah left, many holes were left, congregational members have really stepped up and OA is so appreciative including morning devotions, chapel, teacher appreciation, fund-raising, etc. The Congregation also provided so much support for the combined Church staff/Open Arms Christmas party and other activities.

11. **Music Ministry:** Tico Meneses, Director of Music, talked about music being an avenue to touch people with God's love and Word. He gave thanks for all the people involved in the Christmas Concert that blessed many in our community at the two concerts. He talked about rebuilding children's and youth choirs and some of the challenges involved in that, including inconsistent attendance; parents unable to drive kids places for a variety of good reasons; and actually being able to connect to prospective participants. He is also working on including more ensembles in worship. His goal is to expand outreach to Spanish-speaking worshippers.
12. **Children's Ministry:** Rachel Clark-Afina, Director of Children's Ministries, updated the congregation on children's ministries. She mentioned the strong history of children's ministry at OSLC where 70-100 children participated in Sunday School. Covid closure and church demographics changes (fewer families with children) had a significant impact on our children's ministries in the last few years. We are starting to see families returning after a long absence. Goals include rebuilding a robust children's program where families feel supported, visible, enriched, and connected; conducting parental surveys to determine needs; conducting parent workshops; fostering a sense of community with Open Arms' families; and connecting with local elementary schools. Challenges include consistent Sunday School attendance and securing volunteers in a timely manner for major events.
13. **Youth Ministry:** Natasha Bowlds, Director of Youth Ministry, shared many accomplishments including a Sunday night Bible Study involving 10 senior high youth that meet at Panera (Small Group target area); reconnecting with youth at lock-in: 36 attended including 5 guests (outreach target area); Christmas shopping for the Salvation Army (Outreach Target Area); Intentionally encouraging prayer in all groups (Prayer Target Area.) Goals for the year include setting up youth care-pairs for digital interactions; middle school youth attending a District-wide retreat in April; High schoolers journeying to West Virginia for a mission trip this summer; and gathering confirmation students and parents to plan a format that works for these families (Wed night and Sunday mornings does not). Natasha then posed a challenge to the congregation. She stated that it is fantastic that we are mission and outreach focused but "the result of that which is good, means that we have a lot of individuals that come here that do not have the institutional knowledge of being Lutheran... The people in the 2-3-mile radius of this congregation are not Lutherans; they don't look like us or at least like the people in this room; and that's my youth group. My group does not have parents that are Lutheran, parents that are white, or have two cars, etc. We don't do a good job of communicating with those that don't understand who we are, what we are doing and why. Someone said to Natasha, they are hesitant to serve because they are afraid they will do something wrong and will be judged for that. "If we don't do something to bridge this gap all the people with institutional knowledge will be gone." She concluded with a Phillipians 2:1-5 "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,"^[a] " ESV
14. **Facilities update and Challenges.** Board member, Roger Harrison provided update on HVAC installation. Unfortunately, the installation date has now been delayed to early to mid Feb. due to supply chain issues. Dry pipe suppression system now has 2 taps in place, and it is being checked twice weekly. The new alarm system will be active tomorrow. The Fire Alarm Ground Fault issue is still awaiting parts. All exterior and interior lights have been converted to LED and the Fellowship

Hall Back door needs a major rebuild to repair. We will keep the congregation informed on volunteer opportunities and major cost issues.

15. **Columbarium update.** Joe Murchison provided the latest sketch which shows Columbarium placement plan, awaiting zoning approval. (See PowerPoints)
16. **Financial Report** (See separate detailed PowerPoints.) Expenses still exceed giving and are less than the budget. Cash on hand covers any shortfalls.

- **Cash on hand as of 31 Dec:** \$998,428 compared to 31 Aug '23: \$1,061,041 (This includes LCEF loan for HVAC if needed).
- **Mortgage Balance as of 31 Dec** \$1,424,529 compared to 31 Aug '23: \$1,489,410 (\$54K pd against principal since Aug, '23) Term on note is 2031.
- **Church financial activity FY 24: 9/1/23-12/31/23**

General Fund Giving: \$ 238,962

Designated fund giving \$ 48,400

Total Giving \$ 287,362

General Fund Expenses \$ 275,910

Designated fund expenses \$ 18,415

Total Expenses \$ 294,324

Net General Fund Activity \$ **-6,962** **FY24** Cash on hand covered shortfalls.

Open Arms financial activity **FY 24: 9/1/23-12/31/23**

Tuition/Contributions \$ 520,660

Open Arms Expenses \$ 576,140

Open Arms Balance \$ **-55,480** FY24 Note—Cash on hand from grants and reserve etc covers this shortfall.

17. Announcements: Next Congregational Assembly will be in June '24. We give thanks to God for his continued blessing on OSLC and for all the those who faithfully serve and are committed to the OSLC mission and ministries.
18. Pastor Flahn closed us in prayer at 5:30 pm

Minutes prepared by Tina McGuffey, Governance Board Secretary.