# Congregation Assembly Minutes—June 7, 2026

1. Governance Board (GB**)** Chair, Tina McGuffey, opened the Congregational Assembly on Sunday, June 7, 2026 at 1:15pm.

2. Elder, Christine Maconachy, led the opening devotion and prayer.

3. **Attendance**: 43 attended in person. 2 online. Quorum required: 40 voting members present (20% of 200 voting members). Quorum achieved.

4. **Minutes** from Feb 2, 2026 Congregational Assembly were provided online. Mary Farris moved to approve minutes as written. Ethel Rukenbrod seconded motion and motion carried by unanimous vote

**Ministry Updates**

5. **Elders' Report**. Rene Stein reported the official acts since Feb: 4 Baptisms, 10 First Communicants, no weddings, funerals, new members or confirmands. Attendance averaged 150 weekly, Lenten worship averaged 70, 90 for each of the Holy Week Services and 368 attended on Easter—largest attendance since before Covid.

6. **Pastor's Report**.

   Pastor Flahn highlighted some upcoming events:

   - New Member Classes will be held from July 9-Aug 20
   - Youth will be in Garret County for Servant Event beginning July 18th
   - VBS will be held July 27-31
   - Kick-Off Sunday will be Aug 30th
   - SED Conference will be in Ashville, VA Oct 7-9

   He also shared that there was a Healing Service last week for those with health challenges.

   He concluded his report with a summation of a letter he had sent to the congregation indicating he and Marie believe God is guiding them to relocate to Liberia on April 17, 2028. This has been on his heart for a long time. When Pastor Peter departed, Pastor Flahn put his return on hold, agreeing to serve full-time during the vacancy. He has served OSLC for 22 years—the last three as full-time Pastor. He explained that they will still consider OSLC as their home church. The family (children and grandchildren) are still here so they will be returning periodically. His focus will be on the Gbn Gblublay school which OSLC built. Returning there will give stability for the school. 11 village schools have closed and those children are coming to Gbueglay Lutheran School. He covets our prayers and support during this preparation for transition. Pastor Diefenthaler affirmed Pastor Flahn's decision and thanked him for all his work and indicated this decision will be helpful in the Call process, as prospective Pastors will know his status. Tina also affirmed all Pastor Flahn's initiatives especially in Prayer and Small Group and Men's ministry and reminded the Assembly that he's not leaving yet.

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7. **Open Arms Report:** Becci Stewart, OA Director, shared that Teacher Appreciation Week took place in May, there were many offerings of food and small gifts. The teachers felt appreciated! She also reported on the fabulous OA spring concert led by Keisha Taylor, the music leader. It is a worshipful experience with 70 preschoolers, 20 school-age, a parent choir and a teacher choir. Becci encouraged congregants to attend one of these concerts. Graduation week for Pre-K fours is this week. It will be a fun-filled week culminating in a ceremony complete with robes and certificates.

   The Maryland Accreditation team is coming on June 16**.** The OA staff and teachers have worked hard to get everything ready for the visit but there are still things that need to be done and Becci asked for volunteers to help correct some facility deficiencies such as chipped paint which the pre-accreditation team pointed out. Scan the QR code in the Pulse to volunteer or call Becci. Additionally, she is looking for volunteers to repair cots that require some sewing of the coverings.

   Finally, Becci reported the great news that there are now three classrooms of school-age summer camp—numbers OA has not seen since precovid. Enrollment is also growing, currently at 130 which has a lot to do with Maryland scholarships coming back. A member asked about the tennis-camp sign outside by the doors. Becci said that is one of the enrichment activities OA offers for which parents pay. She will move the sign indoors so it does not appear to be a church-endorsed organization.

8. **Youth and Children's Ministry**: Fox Wilmot reported we have a lot of potential for children's ministry. Lots of children at 10:45 service, but that is not when Sunday School happens. He will be meeting with Sunday School teachers to consider changing the time. They will also be changing the curriculum. He has lots of passionate volunteers who pour their hearts into this ministry, but he needs more passionate volunteers for both Sunday School and our upcoming VBS which is July 27-31**.** Specifically, he needs volunteer leaders for snacks and annex crafts and activities (games). Currently there are 23 non-OA kids registered.

   There are about 60 active middle-school and high-schoolers involved in Youth Ministry, but you won't see them all at the same time. Most attend on a Wed night (although not the same group every Wed) but not Sunday morning so he is planning on integrating some level of worship into Wed night activities. He gives thanks for the passionate volunteers that assist with the youth. Fox has a goal to improve consistency of participation, as it is hard to follow any kind of curriculum with a different set of youth every week. There are 20 high-school youth signed up for Garret County Servant event. The last Wednesday night gathering is this week with an end of year cookout at the Bowlds on Saturday.

9. **Finance Report**: Ethel Rukenbrod, GB financial officer, presented the current financial picture for Our Savior and Open Arms. Current picture is very good because of generous and increased giving, and we are still not paying the salary and benefits of a senior pastor. Thus, giving is ahead of expectations and spending is below budget. Open Arms is running a deficit due to lower enrollments caused by Government shutdown, Federal layoffs and Maryland State Scholarship

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moratorium. However, there has been an uptick in enrollments since April so that should improve the financial status of Open Arms.

**Note. Several members make an annual contribution through a Qualified Charitable Donation. We give great thanks to these faithful donors. But please note it sometimes distorts our financial position by frontloading the gifts. We are still trying to find a better way to represent this but unfortunately standard accounting practices make representing a one-time donation over the course of a year more difficult.**

**Cash on hand as of May 31: $854,920** compared to $849,434 on Sep 1. 2025

**Mortgage Balance as of May 31: $1,014,571** compared to $1,153,639 on Sep 1, 2025: $139,000 pd against principal since Sep, '25. Monthly payment is $18,427.00. The term on note is 2035 but our payoff may be a soon as November 2031.

**Church financial activity FY 26: 9/1/25-5/31/2026**

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| General Fund Giving: | $ 697,164 |
| Designated fund giving | $ 136,586 |
| Total Giving | $ 833,750 |

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|---|---|
| General Fund Expenses | $ 626,351 |
| Designated fund expenses | $ 97,251 |
| Total Expenses | $ 35,335 |

**Net General Fund Activity $ 70,813**

**Net Designated Fund Activity $25,335**

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Open Arms financial activity **FY 26: 9/1/25-5/31/2026**

| | |
|---|---|
| Tuition/Contributions | $ 1,297,776 |
| Open Arms Expenses | $ 1,436,537 |

**Open Arms Balance $ -138, 762 Enrollment was down until April now enrollment is increasing.**

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**Ethel concluded her report by giving thanks for everyone who contributes financially to the ministry of OSLC. Every offering is important and helps sustain our mission.**

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**Old Business:**

10. **Call Committee:** Robb Wilmot and Robin Miliner provided an update on the Call Committee work. There are many conversations happening between, District President, Circuit Visitor and potential candidates. What we learned from the last Call of Pastor Hatcher, is knowing the kind of Pastor we want to Call. The committee has changed the process from when they started 2 and half years ago. Now, the first conversation is with Circuit Visitor to ascertain whether this candidate is actually open to a call. If they are, then we request an informal conversation with the candidate sharing some of the unique nature of ministry at OSLC and answering questions. For example, what President Harmon labeled "wine, women and song." In other words, what is our communion practice; how are women serving in leadership and in worship; and what is our worship practice with traditional liturgy and contemporary worship? Candidates have asked about expectations of their wives or what the politics of the congregation. During those conversations, some candidates eliminate themselves or the Call committee lets the candidate know they are not a good fit for us.

    Robin reminded us that we have a Pastor right now and gave thanks for Pastor Flahn. We are not desperate and do not need to settle on anyone. She reminded us that Pastor Harmon said, "it is easier to not Call a pastor than to rescind a Call to a Pastor who is not a good fit." She shared some specifics. We received a list of 12 candidates from Congregation and District. After the Circuit Visitor call, we were down to 7. After requesting an informal conversation, an additional two dropped out so we are down to 4 or 5. Two of the five are nominees from the congregation. We are now waiting to hear whether these candidates are willing to have a formal interview

    There was a discussion about the LCMS position on women serving in the church. Pastor Diefenthaler, put on his hat as the Bishop emeritus, and explained that the Council of Presidents established that women can serve in any capacity except for those uniquely prescribed for ordained Pastors: preaching, presiding over Communion, baptizing and offering absolution within worship. OSLC is fully within the boundaries of those restrictions. Pastor D also mentioned that this slow and deliberate process is the fastest way to find the Pastor God intends for us. There was a final discussion about terminology and the use of the word "Elder" which has different connotations. Many congregations are using other terms to avoid confusion with the biblical definition of Elder, such a Board of Lay Ministry; Leadership Board, Member Care Ministry etc. It was suggested that the Governance Board and Elders and ultimately the congregation may want to reconsider our terminology but that would require bylaw changes.

11. **Envisioning Team Update.** Tina McGuffey provided an update on the Envisioning work that started on Nov 1 , 2025. A smaller team started meeting in March 2026. This team reviewed community demographics, interviewed leaders of local organizations to get a sense of trends. What came out of those conversations were that people are isolated and disconnected. Several examples were sited. After discussions we developed the Kingdom Concept which states:

    **OSLC seeks to glorify God and make disciples by**

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- Building healthy connections among the disconnected with open arms and hearts.
- Elevating/ Reviving our kingdom responsibilities
- Utilizing curiosity to serve the disconnected
- Addressing isolation and disconnectedness through relationships
- Reaching out in Christ's love and using our varied gifts to serve the disconnected through our deep passion for caring for and serving others

This led us to develop a new mission statement: "**Connecting our community to a transforming relationship with Christ**

We then refined our values based on our current values:

- Nurtured By God's Word
- Led Through Prayer
- Worshipping Dynamically
- Serving God
- Loving People

Now the team is developing measure and setting a strategy to implement our vision and mission. Next steps is for Ministry Leaders to gather in September and October to complete the framework and develop short and long-term goals for successful implementation.

12. **Facilities update:** Sign is working but we still need to finish and place the cap on it. HVAC system at OA is working although they are still tweaking some controls (some hot rooms and some cold). The two Sanctuary HVAC units were replaced. Drain to Lake Luther is crushed and OA Roof has reached end-of-life and in fact leaks and leak was patched.. We need more volunteers to help with some maintenance tasks—see the QR code to see tasks or talk to Dave McGuffey. Finally Tina commended the IT team for all its behind the scenes work at keeping our technology running.

13. **HR Update:** After vetting several vendors we have moved to Brotherhood Works for payroll and some HR function. Intent is to streamline efforts with one vendor who only serves churches and ministries. The Governance Board is also in the process of interviewing candidates for a new Business Manager as Marcie has submitted her retirement and whose last day will be in July.

14. **Columbarium.** Joe Murchison reported that the Columbarium has been ordered and is set for delivery at the end of Sept or early October. Praise be to God.

15. **FY 27 Ministry Action Plan.** Tina presented the draft FY 27 Ministry Action Plan. The goal is to make this MAP actionable and provide measurable and accountable elements. Highlights of the new MAP include:

- Begin a three-year Capital Fundraising Campaign to raise $400,000 to meet immediate and long-term needs of our aging facility, pay down some of our mortgage and support the Southeastern District's Immeasurably More Fund.

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- Provide at least one additional local mission/servant opportunity for congregational participation. Re-establish the tutoring program in Fall 2026 and stand up one or more teams in FY 27 to explore additional ways to support community needs
- Support Pastor Flahn in developing a long-term plan for Gbueglay Lutheran School with SED and LCMS Board of Mission.
- Host two or more congregational and Open Arms social events outside of the church campus to foster relationships among members and families
- Provide paid and/or volunteer childcare starting in FY 27 from 9:30 to 12:30 on Sundays
- Re-establish and promote Sunday morning prayer-partners

Discussion comments included considering serving outside our facility for tutoring or ESOL for example. Another comment suggested a stewardship campaign focused on personal discipleship and growth, rather than checking boxes. Other ideas were suggested and Tina's response was that all these are good ideas that need people to volunteer to lead them. The Governance Board submitted the following motion: Resolved that the FY 27 Ministry Action Plan be approved as amended. Joe Murchison seconded the motion. No further discussion. Voters unanimously approved the resolution.

16. **OA Roof and Funding Resolution.** The Governance Board submitted the following resolution which was seconded by Ethel Rukenbrod

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**Whereas** the Open Arms roof has reached end-of-life and needs replacement now, and
Whereas we did not budget for replacement of the roof that will cost approximately $180,000-200,000.
**Whereas** we have cash liquidity to cover the roof, but paying for the roof will deplete our reserves quickly especially as we hire a new business manager and potentially receive and install a new senior pastor. Therefore, be it
**Resolved** that we commence immediately on the roof replacement using currently available funds; and be it
**Resolved** that we apply for an LCEF Ministry Improvement Loan of $150,000 **if needed** to cover any cash short falls in the coming months; and be it
**Resolved** that we begin a three-year capital fund raising campaign with a goal of $400,000 to replenish the reserves used to pay for the roof; fund other capital projects (Sanctuary roof; OA drainpipe repair to Lake Luther, replace other three air conditioning units in Fellowship Hall, Lobby and office space; replace alarm board; pay down the mortgage, and contribute 10% to the SED Immeasurably More Fund

**Discussion**: Question was asked about the specifics of the loan, LCEF Loan is a $150,000 10-year note at 6.5% interest with first two years being interest only. We would pay $ 19,500 interest for the first two years. Thereafter, costs would be roughly $2000 a month during years 3-10, paying a total of $62,000 if we kept for 10 years. If we raise money quickly we can pay down interest and the debt without penalty. The LCEF loan is more favorable than what PNC offers. It was suggested we not get a loan unless it is truly needed and this is what the resolution states, "as needed". Pam Mann asked if this new roof would also only last 20 years when it should have lasted 30. Ethel Rukenbrod explained that the roof we currently have gets direct sun and no shade and the sun degrades shingles faster. She also stated that roof warranties expire before the "life expectancy"

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has been met. Kirk Rittenhouse thought we should only fund raise for what we need and not include reducing the mortgage. He was also concerned about a fixed contribution to the SED Immeasurably More Fund because it dilutes cash for what you need. Tina said the Board felt we should be looking beyond just ourselves and our facilities as generosity allows.

Kirk moved to amend the resolution to drop paying against the mortgage and also eliminate the 10% contribution the SED fund. Motion to amend was seconded. No discussion. Kenny Farris called the end discussion which was unanimous. The Assembly then voted to approve the proposed amendment. Motion carried. The amended resolution was then discussed. The resolution gives the Board authority to apply for LCEF loan without coming back to the congregation. If the Board sees a significant decline in our reserves due to spending, they would be able to quickly apply for the loan. Kenny Farris called the question. It was seconded and approved. The amended resolution was approved with a few dissenting votes.

**17. Governance Board Election Results**:

**Brenda Petito** and **Brian Modeste** were re-elected, and **Deb Wegman** was elected to her first term. The vote was incredibly close with only 3 votes separating 2 candidates and 5 votes separating the other two candidates. Tina gave thanks to **John McVey** for his willingness to commit to serving on the Board and hopes the Board will find an opportunity to use his gifts.

**18. Opportunities to serve.**

- Capital Fund-Raising Team (See Governance Board)
- Tutoring (See John McVey)
- Children's Ministry (VBS Volunteers and Sunday School Teachers) See Fox Wilmot
- Food Bank (See Robin Miliner)
- Worship Support (See Rene Stein or Stephanie Lewis)
- Banner hanging in Sanctuary (See Carole Ritchie-Pieper)
- Wednesday Dinners and Activities
- Safety and Security Team (See Roger Harrison)
- Maintenance Team (See Dave McGuffey, Tom Moser)
- Landscape Maintenance (See Pam Mann)
- Fellowship (Social) Activities (See Governance Board)

**19.** Tina gave thanks to Pastor Flahn, the Governance Board, the Staff and all Ministry Volunteers. She commented, "we are not just surviving, we are thriving." Brenda thanked Tina for her leadership as the Chair this past year. The Congregational Assembly was concluded in prayer and the singing of the Doxology by Pastor Flahn at 3:58pm.

Submitted by Tina McGuffey, Former Chair, Governance Board

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