

FINAL

Epiphany Lutheran Church Church Council Meeting January 13, 2026

Attendance: Pastor Brad Gee, Dianne Mawhirter, Josh Thornton, Ray Holmes, Cindy Ganem, Jeff McCullough, Mike Poyer, William Lytle, Ashley Turner

Excused: Lynn Rigelman, Dell Moller

Call to Order: Dianne called the meeting to order.

Prayer: Pastor Brad opened the meeting with a prayer.

Devotion: Dianne shared a devotion about “new beginnings.” We should remember that God remains the same from year to year; He does not start over with a new year. We should take the time now to reflect on where God has been in our lives this past year.

Council Minutes/Approval: The December 9, 2025 Minutes were previously sent out for review. There being no corrections or changes, Council dispensed with the reading of these Minutes. After motion by Ray Holmes and second by Jeff McCullough, motion unanimously carried to approve the Minutes.

December 2025 Annual Meeting Minutes: Cindy previously sent out these Minutes for Council to review. After motion by Mike Poyer and second by Ashley Turner, motion unanimously carried approving the accuracy of these Minutes to be approved by the congregation at the 2026 Annual Meeting.

Treasurer’s Report/Approval for December: This report will not be ready until the February meeting due to pending credit card charges for 2025 and some fund transfers to finalize.

Pastor’s Time: See the Other section under New / Old Business.

Committee Reports:

Congregational Events: They had a committee meeting today to begin planning menus for 2026. Tomorrow’s meal will be a based on the famous Chef, Jacques Pepin. The Ladies Christmas Dinner and program went very well.

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Finance: Josh provided a handout with information on how Epiphany ended 2025 financially. Total Gifts received were \$683,976 which was (\$38,524) less than the budgeted \$722,500. Total expenses for 2025 were \$738,056 which was \$49,880 more than Total Income.

He is asking Council to approve moving \$9,186.50 from the G&F Facilities & Maintenance Fund to cover some budget overages in church maintenance last year (kitchen - \$3,654.50 and HVAC & PM Maintenance - \$5,352.00). The current balance in the Facilities & Maintenance Fund is \$20,000.

Josh advised there are several 2025 expenses still needing to be paid:

\$1,175.36 – G&F Funeral Meals (used for kitchen supplies, back in the Budget)
\$2,000.00 – NB Haiti Relief (covers fundraiser commitment that didn't come in)
\$149.37 – NB Men's Retreat
\$54.42 – NB Young Adult Events

Proposal is to cover these expenses from the following accounts:

\$300.00 – NB Council Retreat
\$50.00 – NB Lighthouse
\$3,029.15 – Operating Reserve (remainder needed to make above accounts zero; current balance is at \$117,439)

Josh then made a motion to move funds as listed above totaling \$12,565.65 to cover the remaining 2025 expenses and budget overages and with a second by William Lytle, motion unanimously carried:

Preschool Board: Registration is now open for the 2026-27 school year. They are adding a new afterschool program for Kindergartners on Monday-Thursday from 12:00p to 3:15p. Another new program, Blossom Beginnings, will be on Fridays only for children who are at least 2-1/2 years old and have started potty training. For the first half of the year, the children are required to have a parent or grandparent present to assist with any “cleanups.” There is a Preschool Sunday and an Art Show coming up in the near future.

Property: Are continuing to replace existing light bulbs with LEDs.

Social Services:

- Collected \$7,600 from the Gift Catalog (last year's total was \$10,480).
- Collected 502 items for “Undie Sunday” which will be split among the Star House, LSS Fairfield County, and St. Peter's Lutheran in Lancaster.
- Souper Bowl will be on Sunday, February 8.

Welcome & Outreach: Bookmarks were given out at the Christmas Eve services.

Children, Youth & Family:

- Work with the Age to Age Grant is underway with one piece completed already and another happening during Lent. A second team will launch this week for a Lent only intergenerational Prayer Buddy project.
- Remaining updates for the Youth Room include decorating the space/walls and adding some alternative lighting.
- Ali and Pastor Brad are presenting an Epiphany U entitled Intersections of Faith, Technology & Development.
- Ali will be gone from Jan. 29 – Feb. 3 at the ELCA Youth Ministry Extravaganza in St. Louis.
- February highlights include the Capital Bowl Retreat, All Ages Valentine Event, Fat Tuesday Pancake Dinner, and a Nerf Night.

New / Old Business:

2026 Budget. Josh provided Council with a proposed 2026 Budget of \$715,500. This amount is based on the pledges from the recent Stewardship program and anticipated giving from those who did not pledge and the anticipated expenses for 2026. Discussion on this proposed Budget included some of the following:

- Can the Simply Giving app include the ability for an individual to include the bank fee with their giving. Last year's bank fees for online giving were \$5,052. Josh will ask Jeff Mitchell to look into whether that feature can be added.
- Could we consider giving raises to the Staff this year? Based on our shortfall last year and how tight the 2026 Budget in order to be able to continue all our current programs/ministries, Council, very reluctantly did not see where it could come up with the additional funds to cover Staff raises.
- Ideas on how to better fund our commitment to 1st English monthly breakfasts.
- Change our Benevolence giving from a percentage of our income to a set amount to make it easier for our Partners to manage their budgets.
- Request to add back into Benevolence the Pickerington Food Pantry. Council decided it would do so, although there was some objection based on the Pantry limited hours and other factors. This decision will be revisited later in the year.
- Joseph's Coat was removed from Benevolence as they have dramatically decreased their program with very limited hours to the public and giving unwanted items to Goodwill instead of passing them along to places to provide for the homeless. It was proposed that in the place of Joseph's Coat, we include the Columbus Refugee & Immigration Service (C.R.I.S.).

Josh ended the discussion by stating the 2026 Budget may need some additional minor adjustments or corrections. William Lytle then made a motion to accept the 2026 Budget of approximately \$715,500 to present to the congregation at the Special Congregational Meeting on January 25, 2026 and with a second by Ashley Turner, the motion unanimously carried.

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Special Congregational Meeting. Will be held on Sunday, January 25th, at 10:10a in the HMOC for the purpose of approving the 2026 Budget.

Other:

- Pastor Brad has been approached by the Lutheran Seminary regarding the possibility of taking on another Pastoral Intern for one year, beginning in August 2026. Epiphany would pay a salary of \$26,000 to this individual. Pastor Brad has had many conversations with the Seminary rep, the proposed Intern, our current Intern Tony Maggio, and Epiphany's Staff. He is asking Council to prayerfully consider this request and let him know what questions or concerns there are. The matter will be brought up for approval at Council's February meeting.
- 2026 Council will be installed on Sunday, January 25th, at the end of the 9:00a service and beginning of the 10:00a service.
- Mission Endowment Fund received one gift in December in memory of Carolyn Wachtman.
- Possible Council Retreat to be discussed later.
- Committee Reports are due to the Office Admin by January 23rd for the 2025 Annual Report.

Strategic Planning:

- Space. Nothing new to report.
- Communication. Hopefully everyone saw the new setup in the Gathering Space!
- Building. On hold.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 10th, at 7:00p. Jeff McCullough will have the devotion.

Adjournment: Dianne led Council in the Lord's Prayer and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Ganem

Cindy Ganem, Secretary