

ELC Church Council Meeting Minutes

August 18, 2026

Meeting Called to Order: 6:01 PM

Opening Devotion

Pastor Jenny led the Council in the Real Faith, Real Life devotional. The first chapter focused on prayer, with the theme scripture from Romans 8:26–28.

Discussion centered on the different forms of prayer, including intercessory and persistent prayer, and the importance of making prayer an intentional part of daily life. Council members discussed how busy schedules can make prayer difficult to prioritize and how setting aside a regular time for prayer can help develop the practice.

Pastor Jenny challenged Council members to participate in a 30-day prayer practice between this meeting and the next Council meeting. Members were encouraged to spend a few minutes each day in prayer and, when helpful, record their prayers or the names of people for whom they prayed.

Council members were given sections of the church directory and spent time praying for members of the congregation. Members were also encouraged to reach out to someone they had prayed for and let that person know they had been remembered in prayer.

The devotion concluded with prayer.

Secretary's Report

Minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed. Several spelling corrections to names were noted.(Ann and LuAnn)

Motion: Approve the previous meeting minutes as corrected. Ed

Second: Received. LuAnn

Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reviewed the July financial statements and provided additional explanation regarding unrestricted and restricted income and expenses.

July showed an overall net loss due largely to several unusual or designated expenses, including boiler repairs and Bible camp expenses. However, unrestricted operating income and expenses were essentially at break-even for the month.

The Treasurer reported that she has obtained a detailed general ledger and identified several accounting entries that need to be corrected or reclassified. These corrections are not expected to materially affect the church's overall financial position.

Discussion also focused on improving the monthly financial reporting process. The Treasurer will provide Pastor Jenny with a list of the financial information needed each month so that the process can be made more consistent and timely.

Additional accounting training and cleanup will be undertaken as schedules permit.

The Treasurer will also continue communication with the church's Trust Point representative regarding investments.

Motion: Approve the Treasurer's Report.

Second: Sue.

Motion carried.

Pastor's Report

Pastor Jenny asked Council members to consider the question: "Who helped shape your faith, and what did they give you that you still carry?"

Members shared examples including grandparents, parents, spouses, and confirmation sponsors. Pastor Jenny connected the discussion to the upcoming stewardship emphasis and encouraged Council members to consider what the current generation will pass on to those who follow.

Confirmation and Sunday School

There are currently 18 youth registered for Confirmation, requiring some adjustments to the program because of the size of the group.

Sunday School planning is progressing well. Beth and Kate continue to work on the program, which will use a rotational learning model. Space needs are also being reviewed because of the growing number of children.

Worship and Outreach

Summer worship continues to go well. The recent Blessing of the Pets was successful.

Pastor Jenny continues to lead worship at Pine View Terrace and visits Pine View Care Center and Meadowbrook monthly.

Sabbatical Planning

Pastor Jenny has begun preliminary planning for a sabbatical approximately two years from now. A typical clergy sabbatical lasts about three months and provides time for rest, renewal, and continuing education.

Her preliminary idea is to study sustainable and innovative faith communities, including churches using renewable energy and other approaches to creation care.

Grant opportunities may be available both for the sabbatical and for congregational leadership development during that period.

Baptism Splash

The recent Baptism Splash event was successful and included two lake baptisms.

Council Reports

Council members discussed sending committee and ministry reports earlier so they can be included in the Council packet before meetings. A reminder will be sent approximately one week before the Council meeting requesting reports and reminding members of the next chapter in the Real Faith, Real Life study.

Technology

No major new Technology Committee items were reported.

The recently purchased camera equipment continues to work well and has improved the ability to follow activity during worship. The Technology Team will continue evaluating its use as the congregation returns to the full fall worship schedule.

Worship Committee

The Worship Committee reported that planning continues several months in advance.

The committee is working to determine the date of the annual Veterans Breakfast so that appropriate recognition of veterans can be incorporated into worship.

The September 6 outdoor service/pie social was discussed. Additional pies may be needed, and Barb will be contacted to determine the number required. A reminder to the congregation will be considered.

Council members also discussed visiting Sunday School after the fall program is underway so Council can observe the program and better understand its space, staffing, and resource needs.

Staff Retreat

A staff retreat is scheduled for September 15–17. The Johnson family has generously offered the use of their Airbnb for the retreat.

Worship-Space Flags

The Worship Committee discussed the flags displayed in the worship space. The existing flags have been returned to their location.

The committee also discussed opportunities to recognize important ministry relationships by displaying additional flags at appropriate times, including the Ho-Chunk Nation flag during Native American Heritage observances and the Malawi flag in recognition of the congregation's ministry partnership there.

The Worship Committee plans to provide information explaining the meaning and purpose of items displayed in the worship space.

Building & Grounds

- The downstairs bathrooms are complete.
- New gutters have been installed at the front entrance.
- Work is planned near the elevator foundation to improve drainage and prevent water intrusion.
- Additional snow stops may be needed on the roof to prevent snow and ice from damaging gutters. Quotes will be obtained.
- Work continues on the Elevator Fire Control Panel. A City of Black River Falls building permit is required, with a fee of approximately \$330.
- Designated gifts associated with previous landscaping, beautification, and outdoor furniture projects need to be reviewed to determine whether all designated funds have been used for their intended purposes.
- Other future projects include active-threat preparedness, a possible separate hot-water system for the downstairs dishwasher, additional accessible parking, removal of unwanted materials from the Education Building, pew repairs/replacement, and investigation of possible water leakage in the Education Building.
- The church continues to address the presence of bats. Options will be explored in September. Paul and Rollo are also working on bat houses to provide an alternative habitat.

Property Insurance

Council discussed a notice regarding insurance coverage associated with the church's loan collateral. The Executive/financial leadership will follow up with the church office and insurance provider to verify coverage and provide any required documentation to the credit union.

Education Committee

Sunday School will begin September 13 with the Blessing of the Backpacks and Educators.

Confirmation will begin September 20. There are currently 18 Confirmation students registered.

Sunday School registration is already strong, with approximately 30 children registered at the time of the meeting and additional registrations expected.

A rotational format will be used to provide more active learning opportunities and increase opportunities for adults and parents to participate.

Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School was reported as a strong success.

- 55 children registered
- Average attendance was approximately 50 children per day
- Daily participation was approximately 91%
- Approximately 70–80 people were served dinner each evening

The mixed-age grouping used this year received positive feedback. Older children helped younger children, and volunteers found the groups easier to manage.

Providing dinner was also viewed positively and helped families participate more easily.

The experience of welcoming a child who used a wheelchair also highlighted the need to continue considering accessibility, particularly in the Education Building.

Planning has already begun for next year's VBS.

Adult Education

Adult Education will resume in September at 11:00 AM on Sundays, combining focused studies with lectionary-based discussions.

Witness / Community Outreach

Supplies are being prepared for the return of Coffee Hour.

The Community Connect survey results were reviewed. Council discussed continuing efforts to better coordinate food and homelessness programs within Jackson County.

A meeting with local organizations is scheduled to discuss food needs, available programs, possible duplication of services, and opportunities for organizations to work together more effectively.

Blood Drive

Council discussed the possibility of hosting a blood drive. Because several blood drives already occur locally, any church-sponsored event would need to be coordinated carefully to avoid conflicting with existing drives.

Community Health Fair

Discussion continued regarding the possibility of hosting a community health fair, particularly serving the Hispanic community. Additional information is needed regarding community need, potential dates, and the church's role before proceeding.

Blessing Box

The Blessing Box supply closet is currently well stocked. Additional winter items, including hats, gloves, and hand warmers, will be purchased in September or October.

Mighty Table

Mighty Table continues to serve the community, although recent weekly participation has been somewhat lower than usual.

Approximately 82 people were served during a recent week, compared with weeks when participation exceeds 100.

The upcoming community food-needs meeting may identify additional opportunities for coordination and outreach.

Stewardship

Planning for the fall stewardship program is underway.

As part of an effort to encourage more volunteer participation, each ministry leader is asked to provide a brief description of their ministry by September 30.

Each description should include:

- Purpose of the ministry
- Typical time commitment
- Volunteer responsibilities
- Different ways people can participate
- Contact person

The information will be used to develop a concise ministry/volunteer guide that can be used as a bulletin insert and provided to visitors and members interested in becoming involved.

Family Ministry

Fall activities are beginning to take shape. Additional information will be gathered regarding upcoming family events, including activities traditionally held later in the fall and before Christmas.

Other Business

Council reviewed the timing of the September meeting in light of financial reporting needs, staff schedules, and other commitments.

The next Council meeting was set for Thursday, September 10, 2026, at 6:00 PM.

Council expects to return to the regular second-Tuesday schedule following the September meeting.

Closing Prayer

The meeting concluded with prayer and the Lord's Prayer.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn and seconded.

Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM.