

**Evangelical Covenant Church of Hinsdale
Congregational Annual Meeting
January 28, 2018**

Copies of the 2017 Annual Report were available at the entrance.

Welcome, Call to Order, Devotional

Pete Kisluk, Church Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:40a.

Pastor Paul Allen opened with a devotional from 1 Cor 11:17: "Your meetings do more harm than good" recounting past churches and their meetings. That is not the case here. While we have had some differences of opinion within the congregation, we have the ability to work together. One of the reasons is that we are committed to The Behavioral Covenant. Pastor Paul had us read it together, then prayed as we started the meeting.

Pastor Lars Stromberg led *the Service of Remembrance and Giving Thanks*, the annual service of thanksgiving and remembrance for church members and friends who died last year.

Attendance: 77 members present, along with 6 non-members present, for a total of 83.

Appointments: Attesters: Martha Morey and Bobbi Southard
Tellers: Jeff Shupe, Larry Spencer, Gene Beube, and Brent Cohan

Minutes: Congregational Annual Meeting of February 12, 2017
Congregational Mid-year Meeting of June 11, 2017

Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the minutes as attested.

Report of the Chair – Pete Kisluk

2017 has been a great year, with the highlights of bringing Pastor Joy on staff and then calling Pastor Lars as lead Pastor. We also finished the refresh of the sanctuary. There is much to celebrate.

Pastoral Reports: Paul Allen and Lars Stromberg

Pastor Paul: his highlight for 2017 is the weekend we celebrated 125 years of ministry on this corner in Hinsdale. We dedicated this renovated space for worship and now we are charting our way forward with Lars as the senior pastor. Paul is working to end his time here well. He is sensitive as to how he will continue to engage with friends and the ministry of ECCH once he leaves. God blesses us together, and he looks forward to what God has called him and ECCH to in the future.

Pastor Lars: He wants to name and give testimony to the good things God has done in 2017, to share them with thanksgiving. He wrote it down and it took thirteen pages. He condensed it to a five-minute video [shared awesome video].

Distinguished Service Award: Pastor Paul announced the recipient to be Yogi Mahendra for his faithful and compassionate leadership. Yogi is on the way home from India today.

Update on preschool finances: Jen Cousino. Preschool is doing well and the finances are in good shape. Enrollment is 80 kids, 5 more than last year. Gave the teachers a raise this year. Did a study on comparative tuition rates in town. Decided to increase our rates to be more competitive and in line with the other school programs. This has been well received. Teachers gave the preschool committee a list of things they could use in the classroom. Parents stepped up and raised \$1600 for the wish lists. The preschool benefits from the faithful leadership of Mary Sieferth and her team of teachers.

Treasurer's Report: Jill Rhiner: Because Kerry and Kate Jantzen and family moved to Florida in December, Jill stepped in as interim Treasurer until a new Treasurer is voted in. First, Jill reported on the sanctuary refresh. The project came in on time and on budget. The scope of the project changed as new needs were identified. There were \$100k in change orders based on what was found as the project unfolded. The foundation needed to be re-poured to level it. The balcony was rebuilt to bring it up to code. When the builders pulled up choir risers, they found only a plywood subfloor so limestone was added to match the chancel floor. Lots of fixes were needed and all were done well. The ECCH committee's professional expertise led to this beautiful refresh for a total project cost of \$930k. \$325,000 was contributed to the project in 2016. \$208,000 in 2017. The Hinsdale Bank & Trust loan is \$470k.

We closed 2017 with a surplus of \$54,533. Checking account balance is \$308,201. Restricted account balance is over \$230,000 and memorial balance is \$9000. Endowment Fund is now at \$65000, after starting with a gift of \$50,000.

We are budgeting for plate offerings in 2018 to be \$915,980. This is an increase of 8.7% over 2017 budget, but only 1.5% increase over 2017 actual.

Motion made and seconded to approve the budget for 2018.

Opened the floor for discussion.

Comment: this budget is our statement of faith and theology. This shows our commitment to good work being done in the Hindustani Covenant Church in India and our commitment to Covenant World Relief, the disaster response organization.

Additional comment: is a 1.5% increase enough for all that we are being called to do?

Appreciate hearing all these good stories of good work being done through ECCH.

Pete Kisluk response: love the question. Budget was prayerfully discussed, debated, reviewed and discerned. Council felt strongly that we want to keep our commitments to the denomination, conference and camps. We could have cut back, but we did not. We are in a time of plenty. We could be storing up for the lean times that we know will come.

Payroll is over half of our budget. Our ministry area budgets are flat. What could we be doing if we increased giving and tithing? Good challenge to our congregation.

Comment: is it possible to determine how much of giving in 2017 was for 2018? Did people "prepay" due to changes in the tax law? Something to be aware of as we move forward.

Chad Bulet then asked Pastor Paul to provide a reminder of what he previously taught on good fiscal stewardship. Paul: thinks of church giving as a three- legged stool. The first leg is the annual budget (current giving). Third leg is capital campaign (stretch giving). Second Leg is an endowment (funded through estate gifts). This is a fund to spin off earnings for future ministry. With faithful stewardship the endowment can grow and flow into our ministry and increase our outreach.

Comment: please provide clarification on children's ministry budget. Response: Working on a job description and planning on an increase in hours and responsibility for a leader of this important ministry. 25 hours a week, probably.

Comment: Looking at the budget, do we have enough for covering maintenance, repairs and any further capital improvements we need this year?

Response: Bill Leonhard and the admin team put a lot of time into looking at this. We have money in restricted reserves for some capital items. If you look at the combination of capital and repair items in the budget there is an increase in the budgeted amounts.

Motion to approve 2018 budget approved unanimously.

Chad Bulet made a motion to put \$50,000 of the 2017 surplus into the ECCH endowment fund at Covenant Trust Company. Motion seconded. Further discussion:

Tax law changes may make a difference in giving.

Don't we already have a purpose for the surplus, like for the new pastor? Response: as part of the budget, we factored in what we think is an appropriate amount for a new pastor.

Comment: if we do put the funds into an endowment, how do we get it out? Council meeting or congregational meeting? Response: council has authority to transfer it.

Ann Wiesbrock provided a summary of the ideas behind the endowment fund.

Comment: we are trying to be wise with excess and invest for future ministry. We truly depend on God.

Comment: we don't want to see this all locked up as long-term money as some of this may have been prepayment of this year's budget.

Member called the question. Shall we stop debate? Vote was unanimous to stop debate.

Vote on the Motion to put \$50,000 of surplus into the ECCH Endowment Fund:

Ayes = 70. Nays = 7. Motion carried.

Presentation of the Proposed Ballot 2018 - Jeff Akers

Motion made, seconded and carried to approve slate.

Need delegates to conference annual meeting and annual meeting. See Lars.

Report of the Pastoral Search Committee – Frank Peard

Search committee has interviewed four of the twelve individuals who were interested in our position. There are five areas the new pastor would provide leadership in: oversee ministry to our senior population, oversee all church small groups, serve as primary care provider/visitation pastor, oversee benevolence and preach on a regular basis (1-2x month). Much prayer has gone into this.

Comment: is it fair to say Lars covers the rest? Response: this person will oversee and provide leadership to seniors and small groups, for example, but all staff are involved.

Comment: Once you have identified candidate, what are next steps? Response: Likely next step is to interview candidate once more, have candidate visit, they would preach and the congregation would vote.

Comment: Good opportunity to look at our needs. Many of the five things were what Paul did. Was there more analysis than that?

Response: assessed some of the holes that Paul's leaving would open, and then what else makes sense.

New Business: Jill Rhiner on behalf of Jean Bristow – Jean is willing to provide leadership on getting us more hymnals.

Pastor Lars closed in prayer.

Meeting Adjourned at 1:15p

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Wiesbrock

Attested by:

Martha Morey

Bobbi Southard