

Messiah Lutheran Church ELCA/ Council Meeting
Sunday, January 18, 2026 | 12:00 pm | Fellowship Hall

Members present: Cristall Mount, Carolyn Lawhorn, Susan Hamilton, Judy Mennel, Martha MacCabe, Paul Jones, Mark Rice, Clint Baker, Pastor Josh Moss, Dawn Liner

Guests present: Tom Cole, Jon Driskill

Members absent: Mary Ellen Whitson

**LEADERSHIP
TEAM**

Reporting Group	Leader	Council Liaison	Action	Notes
MINISTRY TEAMS				
Care	Illy Wood	Susan Hamilton		
Disciple	Mary Williamson	Carolyn Lawhorn		
Invite	Kate Spears	Mary Ellen Whitson		
Serve	Connie Cole	Jack Wilder		
Worship	Jane Mason	Martha MacCabe		
SUPPORT TEAMS				
Badenhop	Mary Ellen Whitson	Vacant		
Connect	Michele Wilson	Susan Hamilton		
Finance	Steve Hess	Judy Mennel		
Personnel	Connie Cole	Angela Kronau		
Property	Jon Driskill	Cristall Mount		
SPECIAL GROUPS				
BAM (Disciple)	No Leader	Carolyn Lawhorn		
DJC (Serve)	L. Wilder, M. Driskill	Jack Wilder		
Fellowship (Invite)	C. Lawhorn, J. Mennel	Cristall Mount		
Policy (Support)	Mike Driskill	Angela Kronau		
Stewardship (Finance)	Tom Cole	Martha MacCabe		
WELCA (Disciple)	Anne Tinker	Cristall Mount		
STAFF				
Parish Nurse	Mary Sophia Hawks	n/a		
Interim Senior Pastor	Pastor Josh Moss	n/a		
Director of Music	Mary Phillips	n/a		

AGENDA

1. Call to Order: Cristall Mount | Opening Devotion by Paul Jones & meal by Carolyn Lawhorn

Cristall M. called the meeting to order at 12:05. Pastor Josh opened the meeting with prayer. Paul J. led the devotion based on Psalm 23. He emphasized v. 5, “You

prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies.” Paul J. reminded us that in the New Testament, Jesus calls us to *love* our enemies, since we are *all* God’s children.

2. Approval of December 2025 Council Minutes

Carolyn L. updated the December Minutes by noting that Jon Driskill’s name was listed as a present Council member, but he attended the December meeting, as a guest, to update Council on some property issues. Judy M. moved to approve the December Minutes, Martha M. seconded the motion. There was no discussion about the Minutes, as presented, so the Minutes were then approved by Council unanimously.

3. Stewardship Update – Tom Cole

Tom Cole made a request to Council as he and the Stewardship Committee prepare for the Fall Fund Raising Drive. By April 15 he has requested that Council complete the following:

1. Read *Giving to God* by Mark Allan Powell, which is an excellent resource and a valuable read as we prepare begin preparations for the 2027 church budget.
2. To aid the Stewardship Committee for the 2026 drive campaign, he requests that council develop a plan that all council members will support to demonstrate to the congregation that its leaders are fully behind the fund drive.

By or before August 31, he has requested that Council develop a proposed budget for stewardship’s use in the fund drive. This proposal should be optimistic within realistic bounds.

4. Council Liaison Assignments for 2026

Mark R. updated Council on previous discussions dealing with committee/team liaison assignments for 2026. After reviewing the updates to Messiah’s Constitution, Council will be restructuring Leadership Team groups, since the current Ministry Teams will now be labeled Ministry Committees and some of the Support Teams and Special Groups will now fall under some of the Ministry Committees. Susan H. made a motion to change the “Ministry Team” label to “Ministry Committee” and all other group labels changed to “Support Team” and “Special Team”. Martha M. seconded the motion, and Council approved the motion unanimously. Council then decided to table developing the new structure of teams and committees until the February Executive Council meeting. This reorganization will be reviewed at next month’s Council meeting and Mark R. will have made liaison assignments by that time, as well.

5. Devotion & Meal Sign-ups

Cristall M. requested Council members to review the Meal/Devotion signup list and help complete the open dates left for the year 2026. Council also approved moving the June Council meeting from June 21 (Father’s Day) to June 14.

6. Finance Updates

Doug Mason submitted the following update via email

- In December, our contributions exceeded spending by \$4,446, and our available unrestricted cash balance grew from \$31,630 last month to \$36,076 at year end. YTD, our contributions fell short of expenses by \$4,428, almost break even. Our YTD giving was \$11,140 less than budget, but this was largely offset by lower Pastor salary and benefit expense.
- In December, we received \$10,000 from a member family to establish an endowment for Messiah. They are in the process of determining how the endowment is to be used.
- We now have \$34,500 in deferred income on the balance sheet which was given in the last months of 2025 and designated by members to help satisfy their pledges for 2026. I will add 1/12 of this balance each month to our giving in 2026.
- Mary Phillips voluntarily gave \$1,500 in December to offset the organist honorariums paid in 2025 during her recovery from surgery. I recorded this as a credit to Supply Organist Honorarium expense, which brought the YTD spending for that account back to budget. Thank you, Mary.
- Our utilities were \$722 higher than budget in December due to seasonality.
- I mistakenly recorded our November property and liability insurance in the month of December, so there was no expense in November and December reflects two months of expense for this line item.
- These comments exclude Badenhop activity.
- Our application for a credit line has been submitted and is being reviewed by Regions Bank. We hope to have this finalized shortly.

Dawn L. requests permission from Council to reorganize the monthly budget reports in to a “narrative report” format, which she believes will help Council members identify key points of that report more easily. She would also like to consult with a friend of hers who has been successfully involved with fund-raising projects for the Lutheran Church.

7. Correspondence, updates, building use requests, etc.

- Cristall M. made a request for volunteers to work with the Moua family event scheduled for Saturday, February 7 from 9 am to 5 pm. The Messiah members that have agreed to help with the event are Martha MacCabe, Angela Kronau and Carolyn Lawhorn
- Mary Phillips submitted a BUR on behalf of the Shen Yun Performing Arts group which will be performing in Knoxville, TN Feb. 11-15, 2026. They are requesting the use of Messiah’s kitchen from 7 am-8 pm each of those days to prepare ~300 meals (lunch and dinner) each day for the production cast and crew. Eight chefs serving this group will be preparing the food each day. Although Council would like to be able to honor this request, Council members concluded that Messiah is not prepared to accommodate that type of event at this time. Between the short timeframe remaining between the submission of the request and the dates

requested, concerns about liability with an outside group using our kitchen equipment and their offer falling below our published level of rental fees, Council does not feel comfortable, at this time, with the responsibility of administering this type of request. Council did conclude, though, that this is a future avenue of service that should be considered.

Mark R. made a motion to accept the Shen Yun request for the use of our kitchen Feb. 11-15, Clint B. seconded the motion, but Council members voted unanimously against the motion.

8. Monthly Committee Reports (see #11)

9. Constitution Update—Ready for Congregation Vote at Annual Meeting Part 2?

Cristall M. informed Council that, after changes requested were forwarded to the Constitution Update committee and the final updated Constitution was available, she would have the Constitution emailed to all church members in time to vote on the new document at the Congregational Annual Meeting, Part 2, scheduled for February 8, 2026.

10. Landscaping Improvements

Jon Driskill presented the Landscaping Plan for Front Beds that has been developed by a subcommittee of the Property Committee. With help from Jon D., Anne D., Pastor Dave and Matt Bradford (who works at Willow Ridge Nursery in Oak Ridge), a plan has been developed to rework the front beds of the church. Willow Ridge Nursery developed the plan (at no charge to Messiah) and Messiah will agree to buy the plants needed from Willow Ridge (at a total cost of \$2,000 + delivery charges). With three planting spaces to be replaced, the plan is to complete one space at a time, starting with the space closest to the front door. The plan is to request funding for each separate landscape piece from Memorial funds. Each space could contain a personalized memorial garden marker (cost to be determined). Council approved the Landscaping Plan, as presented.

11. Congregation Meeting, Part 2, with annual reports

The Congregational Annual meeting, Part 2, is scheduled for February 22, 2026

12. Other Business

- Having received new members—the Acker family (Chris and Anna, Henry, Ozzie and Harvey); Chris and Cynthia Coffey; Michael ‘Mike’ and Michael ‘MJ’ Flatford; Nikki Lawson; and Jerica and Tyler Riley—during the January 11th service, Mark R. made a motion that Council now approve the addition of those persons as members of the congregation of Messiah. Judy M. seconded the motion, and Council approved the motion unanimously.
- Cristall M. announced that the annual Synod Assembly this year in Columbus, GA will be held May 28-30. She encouraged Council to help identify at least two members of the congregation who might be candidates to attend.

- Pastor Josh has requested funding for a continuing education opportunity for Mary Phillips and himself, at the Valparaiso University Institute of Liturgical Studies scheduled for April 13-15. Pastor Josh explained, "This conference brings Lutheran pastors and musicians together to deepen shared work in word, sacrament and song, which make up the heart of our worship-centered life....Some of these courses are taught by my former seminary professors, and I can speak to the quality of their ability to teach. These offerings address how theology is carried through words, music, movement, leadership and the visual life of the assembly." The cost of the trip for both Pastor Josh and Mary P. is ~\$2,000, though Pastor Josh offered to use his budgeted \$800 for continuing education to reduce that amount to \$1200. Council made suggestions for finding a way to raise the full \$2000 requested, which resulted in several ideas that can be organized in a timely manner. Mark R. then made a motion to raise \$2000 through fund-raising events, Clint B. seconded the motion and Council voted unanimously to approve the motion.

13. Adjourn

Cristall M. adjourned the meeting at 2:22 pm. Pastor Josh closed the meeting with prayer.

Submitted by: **Carolyn Lawhorn, Secretary**

Date submitted: **January 21, 2026**

Cristall Mount, President

Mark Rice, Vice President

Carolyn Lawhorn, Secretary

Dawn Liner, Treasurer

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING: Sunday, February 15 at 12 noon, Fellowship Hall

Devotion: Judy Mennel

Lunch: Judy Mennel

UPCOMING DATES:

Committee Reports Due to Carrie: Wednesday, February 11, 2026

Executive Committee Meeting: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 6:30 PM via Zoom