

New Hanover Evangelical Lutheran Church
Congregational Council Meeting Minutes
January 15, 2026
6:30 pm

1. Call to Order (6:34pm)
2. Attendance: (* = excused absence; ° = late arrival)

Becker, Edward*	James Mack*	Vicar Nikki Young
Becker, Monique	Hauser, D. Martin	Peto, Yvonne
Geiser, Scott	Rothermel, Todd	Andy Van Dyke
3. Devotions (Vicar Nikki)
4. Approval of Minutes of the December 18, 2025 Council Meeting. Motion to approve by Marty Houser, seconded by Scott Geiser. Approved unanimously.
5. Staff Reports: (on file) Motion to approve staff reports by Marty Hauser, seconded by Yvonne Peto. Approved unanimously.
6. Treasurer's Report: No report presented due to technology interruptions and early January Council meeting delaying the finalized reports.
 - a. 2025 year end data to be presented next month
 - b. Building Fund - roll into General Fund discussion - pausing to bring Scott Repa (treasurer of Building Fund) into the discussion.
 - c. Bookkeeper updates - Dorothy Brower is working to make corrections from the previous bookkeeper. She anticipates the bookkeeper position will regularly require 30 hours/month.
 - d. 2024 General Fund Audit completion - outside audit needs to be completed prior to onboarding a new pastor. **ACTION ITEM:** The Audit Committee and Finance Committee need to meet to determine who to use to complete the audit.
 - e. Payroll changes - Motion by Marty to follow the recommendation by the Finance Committee to move to a 2 week pay cycle, as opposed to a twice/month payroll. Seconded by Scott. This change will facilitate an easier payroll process when we bring in new employees from Grace Learning Center. It will go into effect as soon as possible. Approved unanimously.
 - f. Electronic Payment list approval needed: Motion to approve changes to this list by Scott, seconded by Todd Rothermel. This is a list of recurring payments that can be made electronically by the bookkeeper without monthly approval. No paper checks are cut. Added Diamond Disposal in place of Waste Management. Approved unanimously.
 - g. (Reminder) Expenses (other than previously approved for recurring invoices) need to be approved by Committee, Board, Staff, or Council before the Bookkeeper makes payment.
7. Unfinished Business
 - a. Ongoing Actions:
 1. Property (Marty)
 - a. Sanctuary A/C project – project moving more slowly than anticipated.
 - b. Water Testing costs need to be monitored.
 - c. Facility Use Fee Schedule -
 - i. Robin Fatzinger requested to hold monthly meetings for Montgomery County Area 51 Democrats, Motion to allow Robin to rent the space

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- for \$100 for monthly meeting, per facility use policy by Todd.
Seconded by Marty. Nikki mentioned that we need to be cautious of our tax exempt status by hosting political groups. No vote: Request has been tabled until more research can be done.
- ii. AARP needs to pay their fee to the building facility gratuity line item. Any additional donations can be designated to other ministries.
 - d. Organ Remediation/Refurbishment - a project timeline developed by Steve Eisenhart and distributed to the Council for review
2. Learning Center (Todd)
- a. Status Update
 - i. Jan. 5th opening feedback - 11 students registered
 - ii. Board/Merger updates - official vote approved to move Grace Lutheran and Sunshine Learning Center Boards into one Board under Sunshine Learning Center. Currently working with Jeff Karver to specify what each group is bringing to the merger (property, employees, etc.). The new board is meeting to assign a new Executive Committee for the combined Board.
 - iii. Cash flow shortfall - Approximately \$100,000 short to get through June when cashflow will be able to cover expenses. Andy suggested securing a cash secured revolving note as a potential cash source. It would serve as an available funding source for any future projects. **ACTION ITEM:** Finance Committee and SLC Executive will coordinate a meeting to review funding sources and strategy.
 - iv. Space Utilization - Andy moved to form an AdHoc committee to study building utilization for the combination of the school and the church. Seconded by Todd. The rapid growth from the combined learning centers is driving new conversations about how to utilize spaces between church ministries and the school. Approved unanimously.
3. Food Ministry Board (Todd)
- a. NAP Grant with Martin Stone - application submitted
 - b. \$5000 grant from Gertrude Hawk Foundation
 - c. \$2000 grant from Pottstown Elks - Women's Auxiliary.
 - d. Budgets in the black through December 2025
4. Constitution Bylaw/Continuing Resolution updates (Andy)
- a. February 1, 4 Informational Meetings
 - b. February 8- Special Congregation Meeting (majority vote) where questions

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and discussion is allowed following Robert's Rules

- c. February 22 - Annual Congregational Meeting (ratification vote) where there is a single Yes/No vote without discussion.
 - d. Synod Council will need to vote to accept our ratification vote.
 - e. **ACTION ITEM:** Todd and Andy will meet to determine meeting agendas.
5. Transition Committee (Monique)
- a. MSP submitted, Synod received and is sending to a potential candidate. The candidate has 10 days to decide if they would like to interview with us
 - b. Future steps - Wait for candidate applications to come to the committee.
6. Communication Manager
- a. Hold discussion until office manager/administrator role is re-defined
7. Nominations for Council persons (by February 15th)
- a. Scott Geiser - term limited - must go off Council for 2026
 - b. Todd Rothermel - end of 1st term, can be nominee
 - c. James Mack - end of appointed term (Nancy White resigned term), can be nomination
 - d. Dee Singley
 - e. Steve Eisenhart
 - f. Deb Sollazo (?) - still not sure.
 - g. Nominations will be solidified prior to the next council meeting.
8. (On Hold) New chairs (36) and tables (4) for SC wing - \$3,000 approved, need to be ordered

8. New Business

- a. Mileage Rate increase - 2026 IRS Mileage Rate is 72.5 cents per mile.
- b. Voting Member records - Concerns with potential electronic voting - we need to have a method to record who communed and contributed in current and past year - start communion cards (1 per member annually only needed). **ACTION ITEM:** Nikki will reach out to colleagues to see how other congregations handle these records.
- c. Coffee with the Council topic list - topics to be discussed as time allows (priority order)
 - i. Transition Committee (Monique)
 - ii. Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall HVAC project (Marty)
 - iii. Constitution (Andy)
 - iv. Sunshine Learning Center (Todd/Donna)
 - v. Organ Refurbishment (Todd)
 - vi. Building Fund (Todd)
 - vii. Food Ministry update (Todd/Steve)
- d. New "Pastoral Care" phone number (267-329-9697, Google) The main phone number needs to be updated so voicemails are transferred to Nilli. Voicemail messages are still going to Pr. Scott. **ACTION ITEM:** Marty will reach out to Brent to find out how to solve the voicemail issue.
- e. Request from Linc Noecker to practice on organ occasionally. This is ok as long as he

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schedules time with Patricia.

- f. Nikki - Pastor Erica Welch coming on January 25th to conduct the celebration of Ministry for Nikki. Fellowship will have a small reception.
 - g. Gary Moser would like to ring the bell at the beginning of service. If he's not there, Patricia can use the organ chime.
9. Correspondence - thank you note from New Hanover Fire and Rescue for our \$1,000 donation.
10. Congregational Feedback - none
11. Scott will create a giving link on the website for people to make a donation to the church on behalf of a member who has passed.
12. Upcoming Events
- a. January 18 - Coffee with the Council
 - b. February 1, 4 - Informational Meetings
 - c. February 8 - Special Congregation Meeting (majority vote)
 - d. February 8 - Scout Sunday
 - e. February 22 - Annual Congregational Meeting (ratification vote)
13. Council Highlights (December 2025 here for reference)
- a. Finance is closing out the 2025 Annual Budget against actuals. Due to the early Council meeting in January the Finance Committee has not fully completed the 2025 year end financials. Year end 2025 financials will be reviewed and discussed at the February Council meeting.
 - b. The approved 2026 General Fund budget is a *deficit* budget of ~\$90,000. The deficit will vary depending on the timing of a new Senior Pastor and the compensation package. In order to eliminate the deficit, provide for timely benevolence payments, continue programs, and maintain our staff the Council is strongly encouraging each giving unit to increase giving to the extent possible by 20%. On average across all giving units this equates to \$7/week, \$30/month, or \$361/year. Please consider your giving in 2026. Thank you for your continued support!
 - c. The Council will hold a "Coffee with the Council" open informational session on March 22nd immediately following the 9AM worship service in the Fellowship Hall. NHELCC has a lot of activity and projects moving forward in 2026 and the Council would like to continue sharing information, listen to feedback, and answer questions. Plan to grab a cup of coffee and join the conversation.
 - d. The Council approved a compensation package for Nikki Young starting January 1, 2026 (as part of the 2026 Proposed Budget). Nikki will be our Vicar and part-time Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry until a Senior pastor is called. We are blessed to have Nikki as part of our transition between Senior Pastor to help maintain continuity of our worship and ministries.
 - e. The Synod has assigned Vice-Pastor Mark Singh-Hueter from Advent Lutheran in Harleysville to NHELCC. Pastor Mark will support Vicar Nikki on an as needed basis. Pastor

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Mark will also oversee Nikki's Internship as part of her seminary journey.

- f. The Transition Committee has completed and submitted the NHELC Ministry Site Profile to the Synod, which now opens us up to receive candidates for the Senior Pastor role.
- g. The Property Committee is overseeing a HVAC project to replace the 35 year old air-conditioning system that services the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall. The total cost is estimated at \$80,000. The Capital Campaign funds will partially cover the expense. Watch for a campaign announcement to request additional capital funds for this much needed project.
- h. The Council approved an organ remediation project (the organ is 40 years old this year!). All funds to support this project are being provided in a directed manner by an anonymous donor.
- i. Councilmember nomination cycle for the 2026 Council are now open. If you have an interest in serving as a Councilmember please talk to any current Councilmember for information. The due date for nominations is February 19. The current 2025 Council has 9 Councilmembers out of 12 expected positions.
- j. All meeting and event requests by committees, members or non-members are to be communicated to the church office manager. Susan Gutshall, NHELC Office Manager, manages the master calendar for all activity and facility use to support minimizing conflicts. Committees and boards - please be sure to notify Susan of all activities planned at the church. This is especially important during the Sunshine Learning Center renovation process.
- k. If you unlock a door for church access, lock the door behind you. Doors have been left open causing a security risk.
- l. Giving/offering envelopes - if you do not need offering envelopes please see Scott Geiser or Susan Gutshall (Simply Giving, other electronic giving)
- m. The next Council meeting (open to all members) is scheduled for February 19, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.

14. Next Council Meeting: Thursday February 19, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.

15. Adjournment 9:34 pm: Motion to adjourn by Yvonne. Seconded by: Marty. Passed unanimously.

16. Lord's Prayer