



## Country Chronicles March 2025

Cannon River and  
Cross of Christ Lutheran  
Parish, ELCA

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*Before you speak, let your words pass through three gates:  
At the first gate, ask yourself "Is it true?"  
At the second gate ask, "Is it necessary?"  
At the third gate ask, "Is it kind?"*  
-Rumi

Among the roiling currents of culture and discourse these days is the conversation on the nature of speech itself. What is free speech? What are its limits, if any? What of cancel culture? When has policing speech gone too far? What kind of speech legitimates shunning a person and their voice from public discourse perhaps on a permanent basis?

These are difficult questions that, if we are honest, evade clear cut answers. I certainly have my thoughts and opinions and I'm willing to bet you do as well. However, I think lost in these conversations about what we *can* say is the opportunity for a conversation about what we *should* say and *how* we should say it.

The quote above comes from an Islamic mystic from the 13<sup>th</sup> Century called Rumi. I think of this quote often when I am gearing up for hard or challenging conversations. They are good words to live by if we can. In our hyper polarized culture and a world of

instantaneous connectivity his words become even more relevant. In our speech both public and private we should allow that speech to pass through these three gates.

1. Is what I am about to say **true**? Did I fact check the meme? Is it a fair characterization of a person's motives and goals? Am I contributing to the spread of misinformation even unintentionally just because what I want to say sounds or feels true?
2. Is what I am about to say **necessary**? Why am I choosing to speak? Will it be helpful or illuminating? Will it positively contribute to the discourse or add something of value to the conversation? Am I saying something just to be hurtful or rub something in?
3. Is what I am about to say **kind**? This is not to say we cannot speak hard truths to one another. After all we hear in the book of James to "speak the truth in love". We are not to shy away from criticisms or things that might be difficult for someone to hear. However, we should do it in a way that does not involve spite, character assassination, or personal (ad hominem) attacks that are not relevant to what we are trying to communicate. Is what I am saying for the good of my audience whether of one or many?

This framework is worthy of our consideration in these days in which fruitful and respectful conversation can be challenging to put it mildly. Our own Martin Luther of course was no stranger to this. Yet he knew it was essential to curbing sin and harm. He puts the task of true, necessary and kind speech this way in his explanation of the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment barring false witness levied against our neighbor:

*We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and interpret their actions in the best possible light.*

We would also do well in all of this to remember also the words of Paul to the church at Corinth: "*All things are permitted,*" but not all things are beneficial. "*All things are permitted,*" but not all things build up. (1Corinthians 10:23). Just because we **can** say a thing does

not mean that we *should*. What is lawful and what is right does and should overlap and it often does, but not always. Life is hashed out in hues of gray.

As we enter the season of Lent, a time of somber reflection on our actions and inactions we would do well to “take up” this practice of gated speech rather than “give up” chocolate or caffeine or to attempt a hard reset on a new year’s resolution. Blessings on your Lenten journey in the coming months and the renewal of Easter beyond.

As Ever in Christ,

Pastor CJ

*Contact Information for Pastor CJ Boettcher:*

*Church Phone:* 651-388-3464 *Cell Phone:* 920-858-7066

*Email:* pastor@cccchurch.com

## **Psalms: the Biblical Songbook for all Occasions**

This Lenten season we will be shifting away from our Round-Robin rotation with the congregations in Cannon Falls due to waning interest from our partners. Instead we will be shifting to a rotation between our two congregations, Cannon River and Cross of Christ. The schedule will be as follows:

Wednesday March 5<sup>th</sup> 6:30PM Ash Wednesday Service Cross of Christ

Wednesday March 12<sup>th</sup> 6:30 PM Lenten Service Cannon River

Wednesday March 19<sup>th</sup> 6:30 PM Lenten Service Cross of Christ

Wednesday March 26<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 PM Lenten Service Cannon River

Wednesday April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6:30 PM Lenten Service Cross of Christ

Wednesday April 9<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 PM Lenten Service Cannon River

Thursday April 17<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 PM Maundy Thursday Cannon River

Friday April 18<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 PM Good Friday

We will be exploring a selection of Psalms from Lament and Thanksgiving to Imprecatory passages (fancy pastor word for angry!). Note there will be no soup suppers at either location this year. Please come be a part of the experience!



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## **New Women's Group Update**

This initiative aims to create a welcoming space where women of all ages, from both churches can connect, share, and grow in their faith journey together.

Rev. Emily Carson from the S.E. MN Synod, graciously provided input and guidance as we establish this new connection group. She mentioned that the groups development will unfold organically, depending on who attends the first few meetings.

Stay tuned for updates as we progress with this exciting new initiative.

Submitted by Janet Daley.

Have ideas? Reach out to her at 651-212-0519.

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## Cannon River News

*Faith and Family first, helping others along the way.*

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### Attendance

February 2<sup>nd</sup> 18  
February 9<sup>th</sup> 10

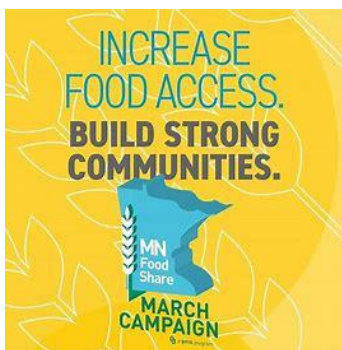
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### Financial Report

|                     | Income         | Expenses       | Net              |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| Jan                 | \$2,060        | \$3,702        | (\$1,642)        |
| <b>Year to Date</b> | <b>\$2,060</b> | <b>\$3,702</b> | <b>(\$1,642)</b> |

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### The Minnesota Foodshare Campaign



Minnesota Food Share is a state-wide campaign that runs from **March 1-April 6** to restock the food shelves of Minnesota. This is a chance to personally reach out to help our neighbors in need. Your donations will go to the Cannon Falls Food Shelf. There will be a table at the back of the sanctuary for food or monetary donations. Thank you!

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### Coffee Church at Cannon River!

Join us on **March 16** for Coffee Church Sunday at Cannon River. Fellowship will begin at **8am** and informal service will begin at **9am**. Bring a dish or a treat to pass and bring a friend! We hope to see you there.

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## Council Rotation-March

March 2<sup>nd</sup> --- Les      March 9<sup>th</sup> --- John      March 16<sup>th</sup> --- Barb  
March 23<sup>rd</sup> --- David      March 30<sup>th</sup> -- Robert

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Cannon River Lutheran Church  
Church Council Meeting  
February 2, 2025

The Cannon River Church Council met on February 2, 2025, following the Annual Meeting. Present were Les Anderson, Ellen Hartman, Robert Klahr, David Fremouw, John Niebur, Barbara Flynn and Pastor Boettcher.

Officers were appointed and approved as follows:

|                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| <b>President</b> | Ellen Hartman |
| <b>VP</b>        | Les Anderson  |
| <b>Secretary</b> | Barbara Flynn |

Meeting was called to order by President Ellen Hartman.

Council meeting minutes from January 16, 2025, were read and approved.

Treasurer's report for January 2025 was not available.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

Dakota County Parks will be holding an Open House at our church in the basement on Thursday, Feb 6, 2025, 4:30 – 6:30, to discuss upcoming improvements to the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. The general public has been invited.

Pastor CJ is hosting an Open House Potluck at the parsonage on Feb 16, 2025, immediately after the Cross of Christ worship. All members of both churches are invited.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Lenten Services – Cannon Falls churches will not be participating in a “round robin” for Lenten services. Cross of Christ will not be able to host any soup supers due to the kitchen remodel at their church. Pastor suggested having services at each church every other week without serving food. We all agreed. Also, there may be a time change. Tentatively, we will host March 12, March 26, and April 9<sup>th</sup> and Maundy Thursday.

Pastor explained that the Worship/Music Committee may possibly make changes to the service format. Sharon Niebur agreed to represent Cannon River at the Worship/Music Committee meetings.

Pastor questioned whether there would be any interest to use funds for a community outreach.

Council agreed to “goodwill gesture” of \$500.00 to Cross of Christ. The funds are to be designated for the new keyboard.

Pastor has been working on establishing a Cannon River Church Website. He will bring more information to the next meeting.

Pastor will bring Tom Benson’s information regarding the upgrade of the speaker system to include wifi, bluetooth, etc. Will discuss with congregation during the March breakfast service.

Next meeting March 13, 2025, at 6:30 at church.

Respectfully submitted,  
Barbra Flynn

## **Coffee Church AV Roundtable Discussion at Cannon River**

Greetings members and friends of Cannon River! At the council meeting following our annual meeting it was determined by the church council that the audio and visual needs in the sanctuary should be assessed and updated accordingly. To that end, you are invited to come to a Roundtable discussion at Coffee Church fellowship hour at **8:00 AM on Sunday March 16<sup>th</sup>**.

Pastor CJ will facilitate an informal discussion regarding the topic that will center on a few questions. They are as follows:

- 1) What elements of the Audio/Visual set up are working in the sanctuary and Fellowship Hall?
- 2) What could be done to make the experience of worship more engaging and worshipful in terms of audio visual set up?
- 3) What growth or initiatives do we feel the Spirit calling us to through these improvements if any (thinking big or very small)?

If you can't make the conversation that morning, please feel free to reach out to me or anyone on the church council with your thoughts and ideas. We plan to use the feedback to inform our decisions on a plan to modernize and upgrade our equipment where needed. We look forward to hearing from you!

Pastor CJ



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## Cross of Christ News

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*We are called by the Spirit to be a lasting presence in our community, faithfully sharing the Word of God through worship, fellowship and service to our neighbors.*

***Faithful through Generations***

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Assistants for March 2025

### Readers

|                        |                             |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| March 2 <sup>nd</sup>  | Joan Slingsby               |
| March 9 <sup>th</sup>  | Jim Hill                    |
| March 16 <sup>th</sup> | Jean Kehren                 |
| March 23 <sup>rd</sup> | <b>Contemporary Service</b> |
| March 30 <sup>th</sup> | Doris Gruber                |

### Greeters

|                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| March 2 <sup>nd</sup>  | Mary Fjetland      |
| March 9 <sup>th</sup>  | Jim & Sue Hill     |
| March 16 <sup>th</sup> | Doris Gruber       |
| March 23 <sup>rd</sup> | <b>OPEN</b>        |
| March 30 <sup>th</sup> | Bob & Sandy Luhman |

### Altar

|            |                     |
|------------|---------------------|
| Mar. 2nd   | Kelley Mittelsteadt |
| Mar. 9th.  | Cheryl Fox          |
| Mar. 16th  | Joan Slingsby       |
| Mar. 23rd  | Millie Niebeling    |
| Mar. 30th. | Deanna Gehloff      |

### Council Person

Kelley Mittelsteadt

### March Ushers

|                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| Cheryl Fox     | Darwin Fox   |
| Duke Bjorklund | Ken Slingsby |

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## Cross of Christ Financial Report

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Greetings!

Thank you for everyone's help in getting me transitioned into the treasurer role. I do not have reports for this month but know that I am working hard on getting you the information you need. I am currently transitioning from icon and Quickbook services to Church Windows. Things are going well and just finalizing some things. I will have reports for this month and next month in the next country chronicle. Please reach out to me with any questions or concerns at [crossofchristtreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:crossofchristtreasurer@gmail.com).

Just a little bit about me: I have been married to Matt Thoms for 14 years now. We have 3 kids: Patrick (12) Charlie (10) and Etta (9). You will probably see them around the church off and on because they usually come everywhere with us. I am an active member at St. Paul's Lutheran Church and work there as the church administrator. We have a dog, Millie, 3 cats, a gecko, guinea pig and a lot of chickens. Usually, you will see me around the soccer field, or a skating rink. I look forward to meeting everyone.

Emily Thoms

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### Choir Practice

Join us for choir practice on **March 2<sup>nd</sup>**, **March 16<sup>th</sup>** and again on **March 30<sup>th</sup>** following service.

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**Kwik Trip Cards-** Help support our Building Maintenance Fund by buying Kwik Trip scrip cards. The cards can be used to purchase anything at Kwik Trip from gas, groceries and car washes to anything else they sell. Available in \$10, \$20, \$25, \$50 and

\$100. You pay the amount of the card being purchased; the church makes 5% of the sales and another 10% for non-fuel purchases made with the cards. Contact Julie Schreifels to purchase at [hjschreif@live.com](mailto:hjschreif@live.com) or 651-388-2326. The next order will be put in

on **Tuesday, March 11th** and will be available at the church by Sunday, March 16th. Thanks to those who have ordered Kwik Trip Cards.

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## **Missions**

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*Some call it Mission work . . . it's also called "Loving Others"*

We continue our paper bag collection in the back of the church. These are taken to **Hastings Family Service** where they have a great need for bags for their produce delivery!



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**Red Wing**



**We will be ending this collection on March 9th!** The Sunday school children will be helping with gathering all the items for us and

putting them in bags.

Thank you to everyone who made a donation to support this project. We are grateful for the opportunity to help the clinic continue to educate and assist men, women and children in the Red Wing Community.

Your response is overwhelming!

Thank you, The Mission Committee

## **Lutheran Disaster Response – California Wildfires**

### **The Situation:**

Multiple wildfires have broken out across Los Angeles County in California, with tens of thousands of people under evacuation orders.

### **Our Response:**

Lutheran Disaster Response is coordinating with the Southwest California Synod, Pacifica Synod and other partners to assess the needs of people impacted by the wildfires. We will work with them

to provide for immediate needs and recovery amid the widespread destruction. Lutheran Disaster Response is committed to accompanying recovering communities for months and years to come.

**What you can do:**

**Pray:**

Please pray for communities in California impacted by the wildfires. May God's healing presence bring them peace and hope in their time of need and give strength to those working diligently to contain the fires and care for affected communities.

**Give:**

Your gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response equip us to respond to communities affected by the wildfires. Gifts to U.S. Wildfires will be used in full (100%) to assist those affected by wildfires until the response is complete.

To give by phone, call **800-638-3522**. Checks or money orders can be mailed to:

**Lutheran Disaster Response  
P.O. Box 1809  
Merrifield, VA 22116-8009**

The Mission Committee will be sending \$500 out of the Mission Fund to assist with this effort.

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**Feed My Starving Children Donation Update**

Hello friends,

I recently received a phone call from Tracie Peterson, Development Representative for Feed My Starving Children. She was so incredibly moved by our donation to FMSC! If you remember, you enjoyed some M & Ms and filled those tubes with change. Through the M & M tube collection and the Mission Jar donations, we were able to send **\$887.39**. We talked for quite a while and I told her about our church and how the people of Cross of Christ showed such

support for this project. I was so moved by her gratitude and appreciation that I wanted to share some of our discussion. Please read on! Sue Hill

Tracie sent me an email with the figures below:

“Your donation to Feed My Starving Children will provide **1,509 life giving meals** and Hope for individuals all around the world. Thank you for your generosity and compassion.”

**Total meals provided = 3,060**

**Kids fed for a year = 8**

During our discussion, Tracie read a note that they received from Ivan in the Ukraine; I have included it below.

“Here is a copy of the note I read to you this morning from Ivan. When you think about it, he had no electricity at his house and yet was somehow able to get us this thank you, which I believe arrived via email. That is part of what moved me so much when I read it. He chose gratitude amidst all the chaos that must be going on in his life.”

*"I got a pack of your rice and I made soup out of it. I would like to thank you for what you are doing. This pack has come a long way to me ... I ate soup and thought why some people send us missiles and want to kill us, while other people send us food and want to support us. Both of them do not know me personally, but thanks to one I have no electricity but I have the threat of freezing in winter, and thanks to others I can eat delicious soup ... I want you to know that your efforts are getting there, even if you don't see the millions of people eating your rice. God bless you for your deeds!"*

“The impact of your kindness reaches far beyond what words can express, and we are deeply grateful for your partnership.”

Blessings this day,

**Tracie Peterson**

**Development Representative**

**Feed My Starving Children**

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## Youth and Learning News

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In February we celebrated the month of love, kindness, and comfort. We helped WELCA by decorating a few hearts for the Charish All Children fundraiser. We had some short lessons, threw in some Bingo from Sue (Thank You!), and enjoyed some Heart Krispy treats

for Valentine's Day. Cheryl also led the kids in singing during the service. We are already coming down to only a handful of Sundays left of Sunday school, we are hoping to throw in a mission project coming in April, a possible bowling trip in the Spring, and as always, we are still collecting coins for Gabby and Jacob John.



### March 2025 Schedule

**3/2/2025** Jesus is Transfigured

**3/9/2025** Jesus is Tempted, Missions \*\*Sing in Church\*\*

**3/16/2025- 3/30/2025 No Sunday School**

Jamie and Becky Fox



The next WELCA meeting will be on **Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup> 7:00 pm. Downstairs Fellowship Hall.** We will confirm Review the Cherish All Children fundraiser, March Blood Drive, and other items.

**Red Cross Blood Drive:** **Our next drive is scheduled for March 6<sup>th</sup> 12:00-6:00 pm.** It has been moved to *St. Joseph Catholic Church in Miesville* do to the Dahlen Hall remodeling. *Our volunteers will work the drive.* This will allow our faithful donors to give on their usual schedule. The church was only available for the Thursday drive.

**Painting Dahlen Hall:** Dahlen Hall will be painted the same lovely blue as the kitchen. WELCA will pay for the paint. If you would like to help with painting contact Jean Kehren 651-388-1009

### ***Cherish All Children Fundraiser***



Thank you to all who purchased hearts in February. The money raised will be sent to the SE MN Synodical Women's Organization. The SWO goal is \$4,000 by the 2025 convention in September. Cross of Christ

WELCA's goal is \$400.00. If you would like to help us further with this goal, please contact Julie.

What is Cherish All Children? It is a ministry of Lutheran Social Services to educate, equip, and engage churches and communities to prevent child sexual exploitation and trafficking. LSS works throughout the state, including the Southeastern Minnesota Synod. Resources for churches include: a four-session series for middle and high school youth groups; a four-session series for congregations on ways to prevent child exploitation; presentations offered to youth and confirmation groups, and to adult forums and groups; a weekly Wednesday Prayer and email update for action-oriented and hope filled messages.

The Cherish All Children website ([cherishallchildren.org](http://cherishallchildren.org)) states: "The heart of this ministry lies in churches where staff, leaders and members work together to act on behalf of children and youth. . .

Faith communities are powerful agents for social change, and we invite you to join us in protecting all God's children.

Our Primary Prevention Model shows how we will work with your community, to stop the harm before it occurs. We: EDUCATE youth and adults about child sexual exploitation and trafficking and how to prevent it. EQUIP churches and communities with resources to prevent child sexual exploitation and trafficking. ENGAGE youth and adults to create a culture that promotes healthy relationships free from sexual exploitation. PRAY for the youth in our churches and communities and for an end to child sexual exploitation and trafficking."

**Future Events:**

**Red Cross Blood Drive: March 6<sup>th</sup> 12:00-6:00 pm. St. Joseph Catholic Church in Miesville**

**Cannon River Women of the ELCA Spring Event:** Saturday, May 3, 2025, 9 am- 12 pm. Vang Lutheran Church, Dennison, MN. Registration begins at 8:00.

**2025 SE MN Synodical Women's Org. Convention:** Sept. 27, Grace Lutheran Church, Waseca

**The 13th Triennial Gathering** is scheduled for July 16-19, 2026 in Des Moines, Iowa.

*Officers: President: Julie Schreifels Secretary: Joan Slingsby  
Treasurer: Jean Kehren*

*Julie Schreifels cell phone: 507-990-7024 email [hjschreif@live.com](mailto:hjschreif@live.com)*

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## **Update Kitchen/Bathroom Remodel 2-21-25**

### Financial Picture

Money raised for the project - \$262,925 to date

### Wood Doc Const.

Bid - \$128,126

Down payment (Nov. 4, 2024) - \$80,000

Remainder due at completion - \$ 48,126 + Unforeseen incidentals

### Luster Innovations (cabinets)

Bid - \$51,746



Down payment (Nov. 12, 2024) - \$30,000

2nd payment after cabinets installed - \$10,000

Remainder and cabinet hardware due at completion - \$11,746





- They measured for the countertop on Nov.21(Don't have an install date at this time).
- Some of the lights are in.
- Plumbers are scheduled to put in fixtures in the bathrooms the week of Feb. 23.

Submitted by Jeff Meyer

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Cross of Christ  
Council Meeting Minutes  
February 11, 2025

Present: Anthony Nemcek, Darwin Fox, Jim Gustafson, Jeff Meyer, Sherril Bjornson, Kelley Mittelsteadt, Ross Nelson, and Pastor CJ Boettcher.

Meeting was called to order by Anthony Nemcek and the mission statement was read.

Devotions was led by Pastor CJ.

The meeting agenda was approved with amendments, and the January meeting minutes were approved as written.

### **Unfinished Business**

\* Pastor's Report-a printed report was provided. A few things he noted was the upcoming open house held at the Parsonage on Feb 16<sup>th</sup> from 12-3pm. Brewed Theology will be hosted at the Parsonage on Feb 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm. Lenten services will alternate with Cannon River. No soup suppers will be served this year. Pastor also brought up the idea of a Council retreat that would be longer than a regular meeting and allow for more free-flowing conversation about the Church's mission and vision.

\*Kitchen and Bathroom Accessibility Project Update-Jeff gave a brief update on the construction. Painting was completed and doors will be hung soon. Jeff will reach out to Luster for a status update on the cabinets. The project is moving along nicely, and the only unforeseen item has been the replacement of a cracked joist over the boiler room.

### **New Business**

\* March Council person: Kelley Mittelsteadt

\* Election of Officers: *Nominations were made and the Council voted to elect the following officers:*

**President:** Anthony Nemcek

**Vice President:** Darwin Fox

**Secretary:** Jim Gustafson

\*Council Workshop/Retreat: Council discussed Pastor's idea of a Council retreat. Council recommended trying for a date in late March or early April.

### **Committee Reports**

\*Finance

*A motion was made and seconded to make Emily Thoms and Deanna Gehloff signers on the Church's bank accounts. – Motion Passed*

*A motion was made and seconded to direct Emily Thoms to begin using Church Windows and Ministry Works for financial accounting, reporting, and payroll. – Motion Passed*

***A motion was made and seconded to approve the financial secretary's reports as written. -Motion Passed.***

\*Property Management – The wall was removed from the ball field backstop. There are two projects the committee hopes to accomplish this year: grading around the northeast corner of the sanctuary to improve drainage and limit water intrusion into the basement and sealing cracks in the parking lot.

\*Worship & Music – Will be meeting in April. AV project is moving along as the final scope is dialed in.

\*Missions - First Choice Clinic collection going until March 9<sup>th</sup>. Following the Annual Meeting, we will be supporting EPES rather than a specific missionary. It was mentioned that there may be a possibility for a mission trip to Chile.

\*Stewardship – The committee will be meeting in the next couple months to plan for the year ahead.

\*Personnel – Emily Thoms has fully taken over the role of financial secretary. Any questions having to do with finance should be directed to her using the same email they used to reach Rebecca.

***A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. -Motion Passed.***

The next meeting will be on March 11th at 6:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

James Gustafson  
Council Secretary

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