

SECOND TOWN HALL LISTENING SESSION
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2019
HEINRICH HALL
6:00 P.M.

65 In attendance

Opening: The meeting began at 6 pm. Kathy Reynolds, Council President, welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. Kathy reminded everyone that we come together tonight as a family of faith. We are going to listen to one another with love. We are not here to persuade. She stated that, as moderator, she will keep everyone on track.

Pastor Klatt: Pastor began our session with a prayer, seeking unity and tolerance.

Kathy stated, as with the First Town Hall Listening session, there is microphone available in order that each individual is able to be heard clearly.

Preston Henne: The first to speak, Pres stated that all those who are present probably know Connie as she and Pres have been members for 25 years and love the church and congregation. About 10 years ago when the ELCA adopted their resolution on homosexuality, he and Connie “pulled their heads out of sand” but then stuck them back in, trying to accept the resolution. In hind-site, he feels this was a mistake. Fast forward to the recent resolution from the ELCA concerning their stance on sanctuary. Pres stated that he feels this resolution is incendiary. The label of “sanctuary church” is uncomfortable. When they go back to California to visit family, he and Connie attend The Red Hill Lutheran Church. When there, they inquired about the sanctuary resolution and how that church was dealing with it. Much to their surprise, they were informed of The Red Hill Church’s decision to disaffiliate with the ELCA and join the LCMC about ten years previously. The LCMC has a significant difference of belief on the issues of abortion, homosexuality and the sanctuary issue. The fact that the ELCA condones these three was in was too much for the Hennes. As Pres sees the current situation, there are three options: 1.- to stay with the ELCA 2.- to move our church to disaffiliate, and 3.-to look for a Lutheran association truer to the word of God and not the word of man.

Carol Benton: Carol began her comments by stating that she comes to Christ Lutheran because she believes in word of God and what the ELCA stands for. She chose to read three passages of scripture to clarify her beliefs: Leviticus 19 which addressed God’s word about the alien living among us, Deuteronomy 10 which clarifies that the Lord your God shows no partiality and loves the alien, and Deuteronomy 27 that addresses the fact that cursed is the man who shows no mercy to the alien among us. *(Please refer to the Bible for a more accurate account of these passages)*

Joyce Keller: Joyce stated that her roots in Christ Lutheran go back before there was a building. She remembers clearly when twenty years ago this church went through a schism that caused many to leave the church because they did not want to stay in a conflicted congregation. Eventually, Christ Lutheran was brought back to life. Joyce feels that, as Christians, we have to honor all of our members and their varying beliefs. She strongly feels that, especially now, the

church has to exist. She stressed that we have to work this out and our differences of opinion is not a reason to leave the church.

Alex Kasten: Alex began his comments by stating that he had attend the First Town Hall Session two Sundays ago. Many of the same opinions stated at the first session have also been addressed so far this evening. Alex wants to express his feelings, but he is not sure where to go. He feels that this is what is currently on the table. One of the issues is the possibility of people that will leave the church if we stay affiliated with the ELCA. The three problems: sanctuary, abortion and homosexuality need to be addressed as he sees them; *Sanctuary* is a part of every church and every church has a sanctuary in it. The resolution that was adopted does not mean that we have to accept illegal immigration but means if someone knocks on our door, we have an obligation to help them without question.

Abortion, Alex feels, is a personal issue. His own daughter had an abortion. There are many facets to this resolution, which states specific reasons to support each individual case decision. He feels it is extreme to leave the church over an individual's right to choose.

Homosexuality: Alex gave the example of serving in Vietnam. When servicemen were under fire and hit with a "Bouncing Betty" and need immediate medical care, would he or she be asked about their homosexuality or would they be treated the same as any other patient? The other example he gave was his long career where he had many dealings with homosexuals, and never gave that any consideration.

Alex feels that one central thing that has kept us together is our connection to the community: our terrific Pre School and all of our missions, especially in times of need, like during hurricanes. Alex is very concerned and raises the question: "Are we going back into the past, into the 40's where we are prejudiced against those in need of our help?" He wants the decision to disaffiliate to be a serious decision and to consider the cost to the church. Would it be more effective to work within the ELCA to make the changes? Fracturing will only weaken the church. In closing, he would like each of you to contemplate in prayer that what we do for ourselves dies with us.

Joyce Keller: Joyce hopes that in the Lutheran church, people will believe in the rights of everyone. She feels that not one side is right and one side wrong. She thinks that the Synod did make some poor decisions.

Neil Springer: Neil states that there is nothing that Christ Lutheran did to start this. We can expect to see this action every few years moving forward into the future. He feels that the ELCA is not speaking to the issues. He stated that "This process stinks." How can any organization put this issue of sanctuary up and parade around in political situations such as the protest against ICE. His family has many members who are Lutheran and have split from the ELCA to other organizations within the Lutheran church.

Kirk Taylor: Kirk read from a letter from **Jimmy Rowe**-who could not attend tonight's meeting. Jimmy is very disappointed and disgusted with the continuing actions of the ELCA. He recommended that the Church Council look around and study other affiliations and to begin this process by establishing an ad hoc committee to complete an investigation into these possibilities and report its findings back to Council. His letter lists other churches that have disassociated, including a Lutheran, Episcopal and a Presbyterian Church. He stated that these congregations

are all enjoying growth. He stated:” The future of our church is at stake here. God gave us good minds and hearts and now is a good time to put them to use.”

From Kirk Taylor: Kirk has been a member at Christ Lutheran for many years. He believes in the Creed that we say together every week. Kirk has problems with ELCA that define him in ways that he did not know. Kirk feels that he cannot continue to contribute any more money to the ELCA. He feels that the ELCA has left him and that there are better options out there. He realizes that we may lose members over this difference of opinion.

Jennifer Lueders: Jennifer began by saying it is hard for her to express her feelings aloud because she does not like to talk in public forums. She cannot understand politicizing the church and all of these issues being brought out that are also political issues. Jennifer feels that we should strive to find a compromise. In order to find a middle ground, she proposed that the Council appoint an ad hoc committee to explore our options. Jennifer feels we should continue to move forward with studies for a common ground and never stop our social ministries. In addition, she cautioned that we cannot interpret scriptures literally. It is an option to discontinue our monetary contributions to the ELCA. She feels the ELCA is not the same organization that it has been in the past, that it has evolved. It is important to her that we at least take the time to explore and find a common ground.

Mike Guerrieri: Mike began by stating that he and his wife Dana have been members of Christ Lutheran since August of 2017. They have had a wonderful experience of care and kindness of the congregation. Upon hearing about the memorials passed by the ELCA, they were concerned and disappointed as they assumed that the ELCA would be following the Bible as they understand it from the Catholic church. Mike and Dana believe that the Bible states that abortion is a sin against the Commandments and that marriage is between a man and a woman. He firmly disagrees with the ELCA on the immigration issue as he believes that we are being encouraged to be religious activists and to disobey our elected government. He stated that “Should our church adopt the ELCA proposals, we will most likely leave CLC and look to join a congregation with similar values as ourselves.”

Allen and Chris Ponsini: Chris began by stating that Jesus tells us to love everyone and we are not to judge. We are not formed to be Lutheran. What he is hearing has a grounding in the 16th century. He and Chris moved here from New Jersey where the culture was very different. Chris feels that some people determine that there is a hierarchy of sins, rejecting some sins and accepting others. What he is struggling with is that ELCA is becoming more political than he likes, but he does not believe that is always bad.

Gary Reynolds: Gary is speaking for himself this evening. He believes that his faith not based on the ELCA. The issues that are raised in the Synod meetings can be decided by each individual and that we can easily access information from the ELCA. Our decision on this matter of disaffiliation has grave implications. He does not care who we associate with but what we will be doing. Gary pleaded with those present to please think of our financial future. He is in favor of a study that will lead us where we need to go.

Jim Breland: Jim followed up on Gary's thoughts by stating that he strongly supports the appointment of an ad hoc committee to research and present the pros and cons of each situation and report these back to the congregation.

Emily Breland: Emily stated that what remains after these Town Hall Sessions is that we are going to have to make a decision. One aspect of issue, an important issue, is the financial implication. She stated that she feels we are not indebted to the ELCA at all. They cannot really bully us. There are options for fulfilling the positions that we can work out together. We do not need to belay the issues. Emily stated that we are a welcoming congregation. The Faith Formation class that she and Jim lead is very well attended and open to different and diverse ideas. She pleaded with those present not to give up and split. Her position at this time is that she does not want it to be with ELCA.

Ray Stickel: Ray began his comments by stating that he loves this church and that this is a tough time for the church. He complimented Kathy on doing great job. At this time, Ray is not happy with Synod and the recent decisions that came out of their recent meeting. He feels that the Lutheran church always there to help those in need, but that he is not happy with ELCA and their recent handling of events.

Doris Stickel: Doris followed up Ray's comments by stating that she feels we have to be careful not to judge others according to their sexuality. We must approach all members of our community with sensitivity. Currently, our church is one of only four packing sites for Back Pack Buddies in our community. We are involved in Family Promise where we are not asking who these people are or what their beliefs are. She feels that we can open our hearts and hands to others in need without doing anything illegal or judgmental. We do not have to be doing anything we do not want to.

Audrey Spergl: Audrey stated that she has been a member of Christ Lutheran since 1993. She stated that she is a Bible believing Christian and has been involved in a community Bible study for 25 years. She has been taught that a sin is a sin, but God loves sinners and forgives them. God loves everybody. Audrey believes the ELCA is imposing their judgement on issues of faith and society and that she is against the ELCA.

Silke Pyrlík: Silke introduced herself as the Director of Christian Life at Christ Lutheran for the past 10 years. She wishes to clarify one thing. Members here at this meeting tonight because of the ELCA. She believes that there are two sides of the issue and that we should strive to find some consensus in the middle.

Nancy Englund: Nancy directed a question to Silke and asked her if she wanted to split from the ELCA. Kathy clarified that the purpose of this meeting is not to be confrontational but it is an informational and a listening session only.

Beth Ann Julseth: Mary Ann pointed out that there have been many opinions expressed on each side of the issues. She is concerned about how we can work to keep our family of faith together. We should take the time to look at what we feel comfortable with. Our number one goal should be to keep this congregation together,

Connie Henne: Connie addressed the fact that when they went to the Red Hill Church in California, she and Preston were not aware it was not ELCA. The main issue that she is at issue with is abortion. Connie stated that she feels that they belong here at Christ Lutheran. The church in California disaffiliated with the ELCA because of issues. She feels it has not changed the church.

Randy Johnson: Randy began his comments by stating that he joined Christ Lutheran in 2015. He grew up in Lutheran churches all his life. His father was an ordained minister since 1955. His heritage is founded in a Swedish church. Randy stated that the church has been changing for a long time. Martin Luther did not want to break away from the Catholic church but had to. He sees that the church today is pursuing secular issues. Even though Randy does not disagree with everything, he does not feel that he can stay with ELCA.

Joyce Keller: Joyce stated that she is not happy that the ELCA has become involved in political issues, but she has researched beliefs and tenants of other churches. She has found that these churches are very conservative.

Joe Fudjack: Joe spoke to state that he was not going to repeat anything. He stated that he does not envy job of Council, but that he trusts that Council will proceed in a thoughtful manner and will make a decision that will be the best for our congregation.

Emily Breland: Emily requested that Kathy to tell us about possibilities that we face after the Town Hall Meetings.

Kathy Reynolds: Kathy began her comments by stating that she wants to represent each and every one. It is important to hear what is in our hearts and minds. Council has been working very hard since the resolution was announced. Kathy stated that she called a special meeting of Council on Friday, September 27 at 10:30 a.m. Council is continuing to look at the issues that are of concern for our church from different angles. We are asking the Holy spirit to guide us. Kathy asked that all present pray for us as we need your prayers. Any decisions made or information available will be sent out as soon as possible. It was brought to Kathy's attention that not everyone was aware of all communications. Kathy responded that we have sent our four e-blasts and that hard copies have been available in the Narthex. The purpose of these Town Hall Sessions was to invite people to say what they wanted to say. On a personal note, Kathy shared that the members and friends at Christ Lutheran have meant so much to the Reynold family. The care and concern from everyone got Gary and her through the toughest part of their lives. She stated that as we continue through this process, we all will be seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Tami Kuhlmann: Tami introduced herself and took time to explain to those who were not aware of her background that David and she have been here a couple of years. There are many Lutherans on both sides of their families and both she and David graduated from Seminary. What makes her sad for this church is that, as our church approaches social issues, that these issues are important to approach as an organization. We are all diverse and stronger in our diversity. We need to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and listen to what God has to say.

She is sorry that issues were not dealt with when they came up years ago. Tami is hurting as she knows others are. Tami pleaded that we do not let this become a political division.

Christy Marsden: Christy began by stating that she has been a member of Christ Lutheran for 16 years and that it is a major part of her life. A great deal of what Christy contributes to the church is done behind the scenes. She feels that the ELCA is becoming more political and that the Synod did not ask our input in these important and controversial issues. Christy resents that fact, and she resents the Bishop speaking for members as a political representative. She feels that our church is very welcoming and wants us to continue being a welcoming church. It is the fact that the ELCA is taking a political stance that she disagrees with. There were ten people who contacted her who could not be here tonight. There were others who feels that we ought to stay. Christy wants us to stay together. She has been sending out emails in an effort to try to educate members about other issues that the ELCA did not address and to send out articles that represent another point of view.

Kathy Reynolds: Kathy took a moment to pass out a short survey in questionnaire form which she will pass onto the Bishop. She stated that no matter where your beliefs lie, this is your opportunity to say something to the representatives in Chicago. (NOTE: This is the same survey that was passed out at the First Town Hall Session)

Neil Springer: Neil took this opportunity to state that he is concerned about Pastor leaving and finances of this church. He wants all of us to stay close to issues of the church that go along with a new pastor.

Pastor Klatt: Pastor completed the discussion for the evening by stating that he is angry with the ELCA. His decision to retire was made before the resolution came from the Synod. Pastor only cares about congregation and members of the church. He has struggled with the issue of homosexuality over the years. In his history courses in seminar, he studied the many splits over the years. It is very painful for him to walk out of his career with a congregation that was in incredible shape before these issues came up and it breaks his heart. He feels that a split is inevitable. Pastor explained that he is a member of a conservative orthodox Lutheran group of pastors. He described the group as the “loyal opposition”. They work from the inside the ELCA within their own congregations to preach solid orthodox Lutheran theology. He hopes we do not lose that. Pastor is praying for us and feels guilty leaving us at this time. He encouraged everyone to be very careful. He informed all those present that Council has spent countless hours working on making it possible to let the press work out and not taking sides. He is confident that it will be done constitutionally deliberately. He understands that he has to serve a whole range of different spiritual issues. He has worked on our identity for the past three years. It is not the first time that he has had to work to clean up an issue from the Synod, although he still works within the organization as a member of the loyal opposition. His concern is for each member and that we take care of each other and continue to serve this community. Pastor left us with this question- Do you feel strongly enough about this to be prepared for a split?

The Town Hall Session came to a close when all present joined hands and joined in praying the Lord’s Prayer. We adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Fidler
Secretary, Church Council