

# CONGREGATIONAL MEETING – OCTOBER 16, 2022

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## How long have you been coming to LNPC?

We kicked off the meeting lining up in order of how long we’ve been here. Georgia came in 1969, but Gary, who was cooking the dogs, ended up with the prize for the longest, at 1955. The newest folks were the Fortune-Meyers family who first came Halloween 2021. Interestingly, however, a full HALF of the participants in today’s pot luck meeting began coming 2019 or later!

## Guiding Values

### Update from Meeting

Each of the members of session – ruling elders and teaching elders – is helping the congregation stay in touch with one of the values we seem to be embodying as a congregation right now. So when we meet, for example, Sue makes sure we are staying in touch with joy, Kara makes sure we are trusting God, Amy makes sure we are keeping

learning as important, etc. Below are the guiding values, and a reflection paragraph from the leader who is making sure we are living into that value well this year.

## Connection

Lisa

Connection is the word that comes to me when I hold our congregation in my heart and let my mind dwell on what we need now.

Connecting is one of the things that feels so beautiful to me about our church. I remember all the extraordinary and creative ways we created connection during the height of the pandemic. Even the simplest thing – gathering over Zoom each week – felt like an anchor of connection; we weren't just "watching" church – we were connecting with one another; there was lots of space for kids, and places for everyone to share stories.

And I sense that we are longing for connection now – as this new chapter in our lives together unfolds. And I'm sensing that this is a gift – a gift of creating connection – that we can bring to our community, to longing hearts beyond Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church. I don't know what forms that might take, but I am excited to discover how the Spirit will work!



## Joy

Sue G.

Attending to JOY. As we each focused on a descriptive word on our walk in the woods, I considered the depth and breadth of JOY. Not merely the presence of gladness or happiness, the joy I experienced encompassed many states of mind, but wove them together in an attitude of complement. The words of the song Erin has given us looped through my considering: "attend to the ground beneath your feet; attend to the colors underneath; for God is here and now in love; my friend, know that will be enough." In stepping back, looking up, observing, the ground, the sky, all that surrounded us spoke of the interconnectedness of our lives. Everything has a place: there is balance, each part a gift to the other. Even an incongruous, man-made rowboat, sitting in the middle of a field, brings the joy of creativity in its anomaly. Joy comes from deep love and trust; it exhibits itself in the humor of idiosyncrasies, in laughter, in contentment rather than the anxiety of striving. Joy doesn't leave anyone out. Joy is story. God's story, weaving all creation together. Where can we find and share joy with one another? How do we make space for story, for connection, for the contentedness of trust? And how does that so permeate our

being that joy – God’s love, Christ’s acceptance, and the Spirit’s guidance – is part of the whole selves we take everywhere we go?

Each step explodes with joy

of place

of companions

of knowing that your own self is where you belong

## **Learning**

Amy

My word to keep in mind was learning. I thought about how we do a lot of learning from conversations with each other and hearing each other's life experiences. It is so valuable for us to have time to sit and learn from each other. I also wondered about how we can learn from people we don't have in our church and might not get a chance to sit down and talk to in our daily lives. Could there be an opportunity to learn and hear about life from immigrants? Refugees? People who have been in prison? People of color? Native Americans? Others?

A second theme in my mind was that in this 100th year of our church we should learn some of the stories and histories and ways God has been faithful to the people in this congregation for 100 years and counting. Perhaps our younger members could interview older members. How can we learn our past and have a time of sharing? I also thought about how we learn at different paces, perceive things differently and might all come away with different takes on something but in the end at Lake Nokomis we focus on learning...Who is God and what is God up to? What is a good life and how do we live it?

Lastly, a practical idea- What if we thought about an area that we are interested in learning more about and tried to find a partner or small group who was also interested in this. We could hold each other accountable, experience something together and share out to the congregation later in the year. For example, I am interested in continuing to learn more about how I as a white person can live in ways that disrupt the normalized systems of racism toward people of color in this country. What might YOU be interested in digging into more?

## **Receptivity**

Rachel

“Receptivity” feels to me like a sort of a combination of trust in God, openness, and attunement. As we walked silently through the woods on our retreat, the phrase Kara often uses at the end of worship kept running through my mind—“please extend your hands to receive this blessing.” If we are being receptive, with our hands open to what God is doing, we can’t be clinging or clenching or holding anything tightly, including our own expectations. Gratitude bubbled up inside me for the beauty around us, for the blessing of

having each other to walk with (in the moment and in this life), for the fragile mushrooms and century-old trees surrounding us. I thought about how, so often, the prayers that we adults verbalize tend towards intercession; how the kids' PTA prayer practice starts with gratitude. Luci used to say "I'm doing my notices" when she was closely observing something—maybe all we need to find the kingdom of God is to "do our notices." We passed ARC's rain barrels, which do nothing but hold themselves open to the sky until they overflow with goodness. Receiving what God freely gives. What if we could do the same?

## **Trusting God**

Kara

Trusting God is not about trying to do something; it's more about stopping trying so hard and surrendering to what already is. When we were on the retreat, seeking silence in the woods, a chainsaw persistently roared in the background. It bugged me. I wished it would stop. But I cannot control the chainsaw. In fact, I cannot control anything, actually – like whether it was raining or sunny, cold or hot, filled with mosquitoes or pleasant. I can only receive what is, and surrender to the reality that God's presence is persistent, God's love is deeper, God's way prevails.

So instead of resisting the chainsaw I could not control, I welcomed it into the atmosphere. And then I could hear beyond the chainsaw, the sound of wind picking up in the tall trees, the chattering of squirrels and singing of birds, going about their business despite the chainsaw, unencumbered by its cacophony. I could feel myself relax inside to notice the rest of the busy forest at work, and the beauty all around me, and the joy of being silently together with people I care about, knowing God was here with us, longing to be present to us, whether we were focused or distracted. We walked slowly, very slowly, and noticed as we went. If we were to get lost, the sound of the chainsaw would have oriented us back.

The trunk of the felled oak tree that the chainsaw operator was cleaning up had landed so perfectly stable and secure, that the ARC staff decided to leave it lie as an enormous, glorious bench, on which to sit or lie, to rest and be, to take in the beauty of the other trees. The death of that tree is not the end. It is just a new chapter. Parts of branches will become kindling, leaves will become compost, and the massive trunk. The top of the trunk, which had been inaccessible to humans, high in the sky, persisting there through wind and snow and sun and rain for longer than any of us on the ground down below have been alive, now lies open, inviting me to lie down on it and look up at the sky that is, itself, in God's great care. This is what trusting God means to me.

LNPC is part of God's ecosystem, God's economy, God's kingdom. We are part of the bigger whole, and we can be distracted from that, or we can focus on that. Either way, it remains true. Always we are in God's great care.

## **Authenticity**

Brian

In as little as 4 months, I've lost my wife of 10 years and my job of 14 years. My grieving 6 year old daughter who'll navigate the majority of her life without a mom, clings tight almost all the time. The space to tend to my own grief just isn't there. She starts first grade next week, and I'm terrified of how she'll handle it. She won't let me brush her hair ("mom did that") and I curse myself for being a terrible parent each time I look at that little blonde bird nest. It feels as though the capacity to ever love or work again, just isn't in me.

So begins my paragraph on authenticity.

Since Jen's death, I've been bombarded by a single, well-meaning question: "How are you doing?". I've become quite skilled at providing succinct, inoffensive answers: "Good days and bad days", "establishing a new normal", "getting the support we need" ... the list goes on. Sincere as they may be, those responses are the tip of an iceberg. Authenticity lies somewhere below the surface. Don't get me wrong; I have no desire for a world in which everyone always answers "how are you" in a way that's exhaustingly comprehensive and accurate, but the middle ground is something I'm keen to explore.

Now comes the part where I try to wrap up with some wise, conclusive, inspirational words. I don't have them, and I don't like that I don't have them. All I could come up with was stuff that sounded like what I think church people should say. So instead, you get me. Messy and confused and somehow in spite of it all, sometimes "ok". I trust you with that, and in the fullness of time I'll once again be someone you can trust with your own iceberg.

## **Accompaniment**

Jason

When I think of accompaniment the first word that came to my mind is how a musician accompanies a congregation singing. We often think of a musician as leading music, but a true accompanist attends to those who sing and guides them along the path of singing together, the accompanist works to match the pace of the singers and to guide them into the musical phrasing and teaches how to sing. I also thought of accompaniment as being together in a community where we guide each other as we walk side by side. We accompany each other and we are drawn together as we mutually carry one another's burdens. Lake Nokomis is a place of accompaniment, not just musically, but as a community learning from one another about what a good life is and how we can live it together.

## **Care**

Andrea

Care as a noun means "the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance and protection of someone or something," which feels "meh" when I think about the work and strength of LNPC. As a verb, care means "feel concern or interest;

attach importance to something," which gets a little closer to the care that rises up but isn't strong enough. Care encompasses the way we connect with each other, respect each other's dignity and strive to be present and see each other. Care is how God finds us in the invisible connections between each other, the web that we all exist in.

When I think about how we care for each other, over the last 2.5 years we have adjusted our practices and mindsets to drop some of the traditions and practices that we take comfort in, which feels like loss but can allow us to see each other fully. This manifests in the ways our church as come together as a group and how we have individually supported one another through difficult and joyful times. Church has been a place where I felt seen and cared for and I hope it is the same for others.

I think it would be amazing if we intentionally brought this care to our communities as we struggle to live with the knowledge and effects of how we do harm to each other as humans in so many ways and the long lasting effects of the pandemic. Living in the world with this kind of care might be the bravest thing that I, and possibly we as a congregation, do.

## Pastor Kara's Job Description

Rachel Farris, Clerk

We vote annually on Kara's terms of call (which we will do at our next congregational meeting, in early 2023). For new folks who may not know, and as a reminder for others, Pastor Kara's full-time appointment at LNPC is intentionally structured with a 75/25 split. Three-quarters of her time is designated for what you may think of as "traditional" pastoral ministry (planning and leading worship, preaching and sacraments, congregational care, etc). The other 25% is allocated for writing, speaking, and other special projects that reflect Kara's unique gifts and allow her to extend the ministry of LNPC further out into the world.

Sabbath is central to the life of our congregation, and we take seriously the need for our pastor to take time away for rest and renewal. Kara's terms of call include a three-month sabbatical every five years, with the next one coming up in 2023. While previous sabbaticals have taken place over August–October, this next one may occur in early 2024 (more details to come). In addition, Kara has a significant balance of unused vacation time available. Session has encouraged her to be intentional about taking this time, particularly given the intensity of the last few years.

## Finances and Stewardship

Sue Goodspeed, Interim Treasurer

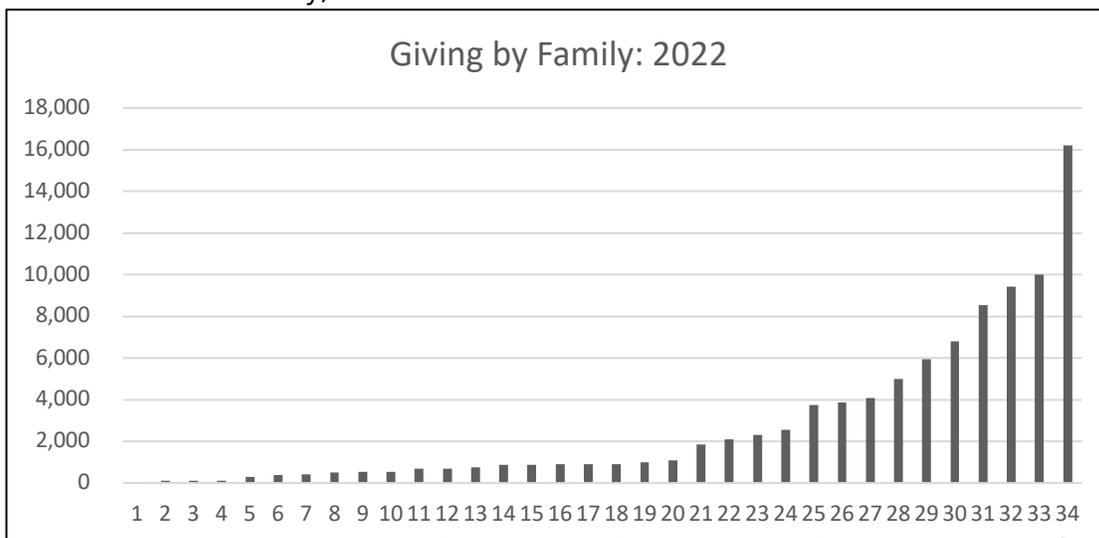
We began 2022 with about \$46K in undesignated funds in our bank. We now have about \$35K. Our giving and expenses have averaged, per month in 2022 (there are other bits-and-pieces, but these are the biggies):

Giving from members and friends	\$ 11,000
Mandala lease	\$ 3,150
FRNNG rent	<u>\$ 450</u>
Expenses:	
Administration (office/utilities/building maintenance)	(\$ 6,700)
<u>Salaries (including pension/medical for Kara, and SS/Medicare for everyone else)</u>	<u>(\$10,600)</u>
NET monthly deficit	(\$ 2,700)

We have been the grateful recipient of \$10,000 grants annually from Westminster Church, Minneapolis. This has offset about half of the deficit. The rest is reflected in the reduction in our bank balance.

We also have two loans outstanding, for the roof (\$500/month) and for the renovation (\$2,200/month). We have used donations given specifically for the Roof Loan, and to the Building Maintenance Fund and tithe allocations from our congregational giving to make those payments.

The chart shows, on the Y axis, the total \$ given to date. The X axis represents each "giving unit" (aka. individual or family).



In order to meet any increases obligations (and we're looking to increase salaries for all three staff – pending a congregational vote for the Pastor in January), we need to step up to the plate, each of us, financially. And word is that utility costs, especially gas for heating, are going to be on their way up.

Update from Meeting

- We are running about \$1,000 deficit each month. We are covering that difference from the capital campaign fund, but want to use that fund for the fun and needed changes to the first floor. Can we each give a bit more to help balance the budget?
- Many of us have automatic payments that were set up some time ago. The capital campaign is over, and the specific Lisa Larges Congregational Care Fund gifts to the Rainey's have ended. Both funds still exist - money can still be given to capital campaign for building changes and the Congregational Care fund is still there to help people in our congregation with needs that arise. **But if you have been automatically giving to both of those from when they were designated specifically for the basement construction or for the Rainey's, please reassess where you want your giving to go. Building maintenance giving is always helpful, but primarily, we need more general budget giving for the staff, worship and shared ministry of the congregation.**
- **Stewardship season is officially kicked off!** You'll be getting a letter soon. Please think about what you'd like to pledge. Lisa Larges said, "If costs are going up 10%, I can decide I can give 10% more, and if all of us do that, it will take care of it." Or we might give 20% to help cover someone who can't give 10% more than they already do. We are all in this together – we ARE the church!

## Treasurer Needed – Aka. “Watcher of Miracles from the Numbers Side”

Sue G. is graciously filling the open treasurer job in an interim capacity. This job is a great way to see from the inside how a church functions. Even more wonderfully, it's a chance to witness how God provides. The treasurer is NOT the bookkeeper – we have Krysta for that and she is wonderful. The treasurer is the congregational eyes on the numbers, the one who helps understand and tell the story to the rest of us about the health and functioning of our congregation financially. If you like numbers and want to find out more about what a treasurer does and how much time it takes, talk to us!

## Sabbatical is A-Coming!

Update from meeting

We've been through this twice before. Jason shared how last sabbatical, 2018, the congregation was given a chance to think of ourselves as a community, and to plan things that would give joy. Traveling around the cities and having church in different locations contributed a deep sense of connection and helped shape the congregation's identity. We had a \$50,000 Lily grant for sabbatical (\$35,000 to Kara, \$15,000 to the congregation), that required we lay out ahead of time everything we wanted to do and how it would go, and that we plan that a year ahead.

Diane noted that our first sabbatical in 2013, people were very nervous. How will we do without our pastor? We had a terrific sabbatical planning team, and people stepped up and did things they'd never done before. The congregation functioned wonderfully, and everyone was so proud of themselves, (while also happy to welcome Kara back).

Next step will be beginning to plan for sabbatical. Would you like to be on a sabbatical planning team with some session members? Let us know! YES so far: Kristen.

## “Relevance to Resonance” Grant

Pastor Kara

I am one of 23 pastors selected to be part of a 3-year project exploring the implications of the ideas of Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor and German sociologist Hartmut Rosa for congregations. The pastors met twice in the past year, and we will meet twice in 2024, but in between, each congregation is given a grant of \$10,000 for experiments of resonance. That's us

In a time when everything is moving faster and faster, when to maintain means to increase, when life feels flat, like a to-do list we are always behind on, and when there is no longer the assumption of anything *beyond* that encounters us, what does it mean to be people of faith? In a time where we seek greater and greater control, what does it mean to be people who live open to moments of uncontrollability? People open to encounter with the Divine? People attuned to our connection to one another and the earth? People watching for transcendence to break into the ordinary? We get to find out!

### What's Resonance?

Resonance is a flash of feeling alive, awake, a 'goosebump moment.' For something to be considered a 'resonant experience' there need to be four factors:

- 1- Something from outside your own self prompts it – you are touched by something (e.g., a surprising comment from a stranger, the beauty of nature, impromptu shared grief or spontaneous laughter)
- 2- You respond (e.g., you feel a tug, you notice, you act, you speak, you feel moved to tears, etc.),
- 3- There's a transformation - something shifts, something changes (such as, you see the world differently, a breakthrough of connection happens, the experience stays with you, the dynamic is altered between you, an action of belonging occurs), and
- 4- It's uncontrollable - you can 't make it happen, or predict it.

Here's the thing...

LNPC has been living this way for a long time! We call it things like “Kingdom of God Sightings” or “Living in the Way of God,” or “Stories of Resurrection” or “assuming the inner stance of least resistance to being overtaken by the graced event we cannot make happen” (James Finley), or, “heart-singing,” as in, during the last sabbatical when we asked, “What would make our hearts sing?” But now we have a mandate and some money to be attentive and open. To be creative and imaginative. To facilitate opportunities to experience resonance (which is to say, to try to make ourselves open to the uncontrollable event of encounter that we can’t produce).

### **What Happens Now?**

In 2024, members of the grant team will visit us to hear some stories of what this was like for us. But in the meantime, we get to dream and find ways to together assume the inner stance of least resistance to joy, connection and God-encounters.

We’ve begun to brainstorm – things like installing a group-swing on the front lawn, taking retreats or trips together, podcast-style recordings of our kids interviewing older adults about their life and faith, offering individual silent retreats to anyone in the church who wants one, story-sharing gatherings. And we can draw from our previous experience to spark our imagination as well, such as, bread-baking church, zoo church, sculpture garden church, staycation, Sunday evening zoom congregational prayer with the Rainey’s, the mandala artist coming for Rally Sunday, costumes and picnic last Halloween, the day retreat we did at Mt. Olivet Retreat Center in 2018.

And fyi – this week session noted that the thing that feels most valuable and that we long for most is: Time. Time together. Time in rest, and especially in *play*. Being rushed and hurried is a near guarantee of missing resonant encounters and being closed to transcendent moments, and yet, that’s the state most modern people live in nearly all the time. In other words, assuming the inner stance of least resistance is not a forced or fast thing. And beauty, wonder, rest, play, rich conversations, rocking a baby to sleep, really deeply listening, these are things that take time. So maybe, (like the “dishonest manager” in that parable from a few weeks ago who used the means of the empire and his corrupt and familiar practices of business to buy himself good will and open himself to the possibility of the deeper reality - the welcome into relationship of love) maybe it would help us to think that this money is buying our time. It’s buying us time to spend with each other, time to be open to God, time to be receptive to the world, time to devote ourselves to things that bring joy.

If you have some ideas bubbling inside, let session know! For now, we begin the process of prayerfully wondering, and we’ll let you know the next steps when we know them!

## LNPC Cookbook

Get your recipes to Erin in the next two weeks, please! (Or if there is a recipe you love from someone else in the congregation, ask them to send it in!)

## We elected the next slate of elders!

Update from Meeting

Jason DeBoer-Moran will serve a second term, and Sue Hensel will come on board replacing Amy Leafblad, whose term ends in December.

## 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Brainstorming

**Names in parenthesis are those who want to work on this. If you'd like to help make any of these ideas a reality, LET US KNOW!**

### Church Birthday Party: 10 am-2 pm, 12/4/22

Questions: How do we want to celebrate the church's 100th birthday?  
How do we want to launch our next century?

Happy Birthday messages as video clips from people connected to congregation (Kara)

Big banner or sign outside

Special music: The brothers Franzic? (Kristen)

Video happy birthday messages from past and present congregants (Kara)

Pop-up bell choir or regular choir

Telling the church's "birth story" (Sue G—historical docs)

Church "museum" in Artspace, or show and tell of old objects/pictures/etc.

Church timeline

Recreate old photos

Group picture/family photo

Time capsule

Church merch (Wendy)

New logo contest

Communal art project—mosaic? (Erin/Wendy)

Swedish Death Cleaning Team (Wendy, Kristen, Sue G. Amanda, Sherri)

History facts: What else was going on in 1922?

Scavenger hunt

Church trivia via Cahoot (Wendy)

Video of church memories including clips recorded during Waffle Worship (Lisa, Amanda, Kara)

We have 6 weeks to make our birthday party special! Several of these ideas will be kicked off now but continue on after 12/4. (Officially, our 100<sup>th</sup> birthday was April 21 – so the birthday year extends till Spring!)

Now scheduled or moving forward as a result of this conversation

- **Christmas Corner Caroling: December 10, 6:15 pm** (Amanda -flyers)
- **The “Swedish Death Cleaning Team”** (aka. group that is reorganizing space) – is moving forward with purging, redecorating and reshaping how we use different parts of the building – especially the Hub, and office area. This is inspired by the 100<sup>th</sup> – won’t be complete by Dec. 4, but can definitely get started before then!