

First English Lutheran Church Council Minutes
23 March 2026

Council members present at FELC.

Betsy Appleton, Margaret Bruesch, Charlie Boas, Larry Collmann, Michele Hockett-Cooper, Leigh Northcutt-Benson, Anne Wiebe

Council members present via Zoom.

Paul Barlow, Lillian Martinez Rodriguez, Erin McCracken, Mari Ward

Council members absent.

Elijah Aguirre

Staff present.

Pastor Katie Rode

Call to Order.

President Leigh Northcutt-Benson called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Devotions.

Pastor Katie presented a devotion on the topic of Sabbath, drawing on Barbara Brown Taylor's *An Altar in the World*.

Consent Agenda.

The consent agenda is a way to contain reports without taking up valuable meeting time.

- *Any report with action items is removed from the consent agenda.*
- *Reports that remain on the consent agenda are approved as a block.*
- *Reports without action items may also be removed from the consent agenda upon request.*

This meeting's consent agenda includes the following documents, which may be found in the meeting package:

- Council minutes from February 23 2026
- Resolutions/Motions/Requests for Council Action
 - Resolution to Appoint FELC Communication and Documentation Task Force
 - FELC Roofing Repair Estimates
 - Motion to Renew FELC's Food Permit
 - Request to Appoint Council Member to Columbarium Committee
- Ministry Teams Reports
 - Learning Ministry Team Report
 - Property Committee Team Report
 - Stewardship Committee Report
 - Micah 6 Report

- Worship Ministry Team Report
- Pastor's Report

The following was removed from the consent agenda for further discussion:

- Treasurer's Report, including:
 - Resolutions Moving the Congregation's Banking Relations
 - Resolutions Transferring Surplus to Reserve Fund

Motion to approve consent agenda made by Betsy, seconded by Michele, affirmed by vote.

Discussion of the Treasurer's Report.

1. Resolutions Transferring Surplus to Reserve Fund.

At the end of February there was a predicted surplus of \$24K by the end of March. Currently it looks more like \$14K.

Because our giving is highly uneven throughout the year, we need to be conservative about moving surplus funds.

Pastor Katie suggests: suspend the understanding that we pay benevolence by quarter, review at the end of each quarter to determine whether we want to continue the suspension. For purposes of this resolution, this means we would not pass the resolution to transfer funds to the Emergency Borrowing Fund (EBF).

Motion to extend time allocated for this discussion made by Michele, seconded by Betsy, affirmed by vote.

Question: How do we communicate this to the congregation?

Answer: Benevolence recipients are not yet determined, so this should not be an issue. We do need to let Gwen Flory know ASAP.

Motion to suspend quarterly benevolence giving until June 30 2026 — and review again at that time — made by Leigh, seconded by Michele, affirmed by vote.

2. Resolutions Moving the Congregation's Banking Relations.

Betsy speaks enthusiastically for breaking ties with Chase Bank and moving to a local credit union (Amplify). Motion to pass the resolution as written by Joe Cain — with the spelling of Erin McCracken's name corrected — offered by Betsy, seconded by Anne, affirmed by vote.

Old Business.

1. Adoption of Council Covenant.

Leigh provided printed copies of the final, cleaned-up Council covenant that was created at the Council retreat on March 14, 2026. A soft copy is included as Attachment

1 to these minutes. Motion to adopt the covenant as written made by Anne, seconded by Michele, affirmed by vote.

2. Adoption of Clarified Mission Statement.

Clarified mission statement, presented at the Council retreat, is: *In 2026 we unify our congregation focus on stewarding our resources so we can continue to declare the Word of God and the love of Jesus Christ through proclamation, teaching, worship and a caring ministry to all people.*

Motion to adopt the mission statement made by Michele, seconded by Charlie, affirmed by vote.

3. Debrief from Retreat work.

Lois Holck has suggested that Funeral Hospitality be added to the organization chart under Service Team I Care. Anne will confirm that Nancy Neuse still has this role; if not, she will determine who does.

Pastor Katie has prepared a statement describing our proposed Sabbath observance for the benefit of visitors to FELC. She will email it to Council members tomorrow.

New Business.

1. New Announcement Structure and Start Dates.

Pastor Katie described the new announcement policy, designed to keep focus on FELC's chosen ministry areas while still allowing for relaxed community-building. A copy of her description is included as Attachment 2 to these minutes.

2. Lesson on April 19 2026 in Learning Ministry.

Pastor Katie will host a presentation on FELC's proposed two-month Sabbath observation during the Faith Formation period on April 19. In brief, this Sabbath will consist of:

- A full two-month Sabbath from all ministry work, currently slated for June and July.
- During this time we will all be invited to engage in worship and reflection; questions for consideration will be provided weekly.
- At the end of the two months, active ministries will resume, possibly with changes.
- Council will assess individual ministries and their particular needs. This activity will run throughout the Sabbath period and beyond.

Discussion highlights:

- What is our "mission", anyway? This is one thing we will need to figure out.
- Ministries are invited to take Sabbath; it is not mandatory. If, e.g., Prayer Circle wishes to continue meeting, they are free to do so.
- It seems counter to how we've always operated. It will be hard. But we can learn things we wouldn't learn otherwise.

- “Invisible” ministries will become visible.

3. Form Nominating Committee for 2027.

Typically the Council nominating committee is appointed at the end of the year. Why wait? Let's begin scouting talent for the 2027 Council ahead of time. Motion to appoint outgoing members Leigh, Charlie, Margaret, and Mari to the Nominating Committee made by Anne, seconded by Pastor Katie, affirmed by vote.

Brief discussion regarding the size of Council going forward — how many seats do we need to have? How many make sense for us at this stage? No answers yet.

4. Approve New Members.

Claire Coulson and Debbie el Bathy have asked to be accepted as members of FELC. Motion to approve made by Charlie, seconded by Betsy and Leigh, affirmed by vote. Claire and Debbie will be formally welcomed during worship on May 3.

Meeting Action Points.

- Anne will determine who is currently in charge of Funeral Hospitality.
- Betsy will connect with Benevolence Committee about suspending disbursement of surplus funds.
- Charlie will connect with LaRu Woody to confirm that Bryan's music outreach efforts are included in the Property Rental Task Force's considerations.

Next Council Meeting Date/Time.

Next meeting will be April 27, 2026.

Closing Prayer

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made at 8:08 by Pastor Katie, seconded by Michele, affirmed by vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Bruesch
FELC Council Secretary

Attachment 1.

FELC Congregation Council 2026 Council Covenant

1. Grow spiritually through the practice of Sabbath.
2. Hold grace-filled accountability for our fellow council members.
3. Live Sabbath work with honesty even/especially when uncomfortable.
4. Practice Active Listening: Listen with openness to persuasion.
5. Maintain clear and timely communication to and from the congregation.
6. Guard and consistently communicate the mission of the congregation.
7. Work to make sure our mission is sustainably funded and supported.
8. Support established organizational structure and process.
9. Be respectful of time for all council members and meetings.
10. Prepare for council meetings by reading material ahead of time and discussing issues with other council members via email as much as possible before council meetings.

Attachment 2.

Change of Announcements: First English Lutheran Church

I. Implementation Timeline

- **Primary Change:** Announcements will no longer be given verbally during the worship service. There will be an opportunity for Ministry Moments in worship that will be tied directly to mission and at the approval of the Pastor.

Start Date:

Mar 05 - final system outlay and tweaks with Admin Dawn (develop separate needs sheet w/ Dawn)

Mar 10 - finalize schedule set

Mar 10 - Pastor Katie makes any final decisions on outlay/form, i.e. how to list teams, committees, groups

Mar 14 - Pastor Katie initially informs Congregation Council verbally at retreat

Mar 15 - inform Worship Ministry Team of change, schedule, info

communicate final needs to Shannon for form

Mar 14 - draft of frequent flyers email is completed

Mar 24 - final brief outlay to Congregation Council

Mar 24 - Pastor Katie and Cantor Bryan inform Heidi for bulletin boards (develop separate needs sheet for Heidi)

Mar 26 - Pastor Katie (and Cantor Bryan) develop brief community note in weekly newsletter

Mar 29 - penultimate verbal Sunday morning announcements in worship (Palm Sunday)

Apr 1, 2 - no verbal worship announcements

Apr 5 - Pastor delivers brief, verbal announcements of timely items already printed in bulletin (Easter Day)

Apr 7 - 9 - Heidi changes bulletin boards

Apr 7 - last verbal Sunday morning announcements in worship (Second Sunday of Easter)

Apr 9 - brief community note in weekly newsletter published

II. New Announcement Format: Hospitality Time

- **Location:** Fellowship Hall.
- **Structure:** Dedicated time during the hospitality hour for in-person announcements.
- **Announcement Host:** Nikki Northcutt will serve as host, capturing the room's attention and inviting speakers forward.
- **Benefits:**
 - **Worship Focus:** Frees up worship time to remain focused on the liturgy and word.
 - **Interaction:** Creates a "pure time" for announcements that allows for immediate back-and-forth dialogue.
 - **Community Building:** Encourages on-site engagement that cannot be replicated for those viewing online.

III. Announcement Submission Process & Categories

- **Submission Method:** A dedicated Google Form will be available on the church website and in the newsletter.
- **Categories:** The form will offer six distinct categories for those wanting to make an announcement to the community:
 - **Categories 1–5:** The five primary ministry teams of the congregation.
 - **Category 6: Community Connections:** For items that are ministry-related but not directly part of First English Lutheran's specific ministries.

IV. Distribution & Display

- **Worship Bulletin:**
 - **Ministry Announcements:** Only items pertaining to the five ministry teams will be printed in the worship bulletin
- **Bulletin Boards:** Two separate boards have been created in the Fellowship Hall:
 1. **Ministry Bulletin Board:** Displays all team-related announcements printed in the bulletin.

2. **Community Connections Board:** Displays all community-related announcements.
 - **Unsubmitted Announcements:** Folks may still make an announcement during the fellowship hour without prior submission, but it will not be included in the printed materials.