

**Living Hope Lutheran Church**  
Council Minutes  
December 5, 2023, 6:30pm

1. Attendance: Pastor Daniel Flucke, Jen Eason, Andy Krueger, Joe Georgeson, Chris Lear, Brad LeDuc, Shannon Stoker, Beki Tetzlaff, Dawn Zirtzlaff, Trinny Schuman
2. Opening Devotion: Pastor Daniel share psalms with the theme, "too good to be true" relative to the Christmas story and Advent.
3. Approval of minutes from October 17, 2023 meeting were approved on a motion by Joseph Georgeson and seconded by Andy Krueger.
4. Pastor's Report: In addition to the report that is online, pastor asked for help December 24, 10:30, to distribute cookies from church to be brought to various locations. Announcement will be made Sunday.
5. Financial Report: The October 2023 report is not complete at this time. As discussed previously approximately \$24,000 was taken from the reserve fund and about \$20,000 was taken from the designated fund accounts to meet expenses for construction projects that have been completed.
6. Construction Project: See the updated spreadsheet: 11/20/23 Balance Sheet

Application for a Homeland Security Grant to help pay for lights and camera in the parking lot is pending. Gary (possibly) will take the lead on that. We will wait until we get the money before proceeding.

Discussion with Beki and Dawn regarding the relationship between Living Hope Church and Here We Grow took some time well spent.

Communication between the church and the mission HWG is essential so that both parties understand the needs of the other.

Attached is a history of Here We Grow as well as a time line for future reference. No financial decisions were made but some suggestions were made to strengthen communication. What that will look like is still to be determined.

FYI, Here we grow is having some cabinets put in a room, some painting done, mice control, and waiting for garage doors.

7. Church Musician: Trinny attended the meeting and discussion involved some history of the music we have had in the past and the desire to have a chorus, both adults and children. The ongoing issue is attendance-where have all the kids gone?

Some suggestions for Trinny's involvement were to continue playing each Sunday, help with choir (maybe twice a month), work with planning liturgy and songs, organize special music if possible. Nothing was "cast in stone," but suggestions were made. Trinny and Henry are part of the Living Hope family and the council is determined to find a role for her that uses all that she brings to us. We are looking to January to address this more formally.

8. Pastor Daniel's housing allowance was approved at \$19,000 on a motion by Joe and seconded by Chris.

9. Lighthouse contribution has been made.

10. Annual meeting date is January 28, 2024.

11. Joint council will meet at Christ the King on January 17, 2024, at 6:30 followed by the next Living Hope Council meeting. At that meeting

there will hopefully be a proposed 2024 budget which still has to be ironed out.

## 12. A prayer closed the meeting.

### -The story of Here We Grow-

In 2001 after a number of years working together as 3k & 4k teachers as well as director and assistant director, at a child care center in Grafton Beki and Dawn felt the need to start their own preschool & childcare center. A new owner had bought out the center they worked at, and her vision just didn't fit what they thought was best for children and families. Dawn and Beki spoke with Pastor Marilyn, the pastor of Living Hope during that time, and presented their plan to open a preschool and child care center at the church. Pastor Marilyn's vision was to have Here We Grow be a mission of Living Hope, rather than have HWG rent the space. Along with one other partner Dawn and Beki began plans to open as soon as possible. Several teachers from their current workplace came with to work at the new center. The shared mission between Here We Grow and Living Hope has always been to serve the families in the community with the best possible care and Christian value system.

As the teachers, directors, LH council and Pastor Marilyn began all the steps to get started, including licensing, inspections, purchasing of materials, etc., they could feel the spirit of God interceding to help get things going quickly, as many families from the past center were waiting to start their children at HWG as soon as possible. It didn't take long from the opening day Dec 2, 2001, for the program to be filled to capacity with a wait list of prospective enrollees. The first 5 years were spent in the original side of the building with the "big room/fellowship hall" being divided up into 3 classrooms, and the current church office spaces were also used for classroom space. The program was so successful that after a short time, more space was needed to accommodate the growing business. In addition to that the Sunday school and youth programs at Living Hope were busting at the seams and needed gathering/classroom space. Ground breaking for the addition (the current home to HWG) was held on Sept 11 2005. In April 2006 church members, families, teachers, and directors volunteered, working together to help finish up the project, roofing, remodeling church space, insulating, painting, and staining. The teachers and children were able to move into the new space in late April 2006.

Here We Grow has always had a quality reputation in the community; we serve families from all over Ozaukee and Washington Counties. Mostly all of the business comes from word of mouth, families recommending us to friends, co-workers and extended family. There isn't a need for advertising, quite the opposite, on a weekly basis we sadly have to decline care to many requests for spots in the center, Many of our teachers have been with us for over 5 and even 15 years. The quality and dedication of our teachers is what makes HWG the best center in the area, we pride ourselves on being a staff that is supportive like family.

There have been some ups and downs financially with HWG but the center has always been stable and able to make ends meet. The hope and verbal agreement from the start was that Living Hope Church would grow and be able to give more financial support, by eliminating HWG's portion of the mortgage payment. Many years HWG struggled with the budget striving to pay staff higher wages, and offer substantial benefits to teachers. During various times throughout the existence of HWG the directors have had many years of long hours covering classrooms during staff absences and when teachers were in short supply in addition to their daily director work load. An agreement was made for Directors to work 4 day, 32 hour work week t a lower salary point, yet in most cases it is still a 40 hour work week.

Most recently HWG has given promotions to some teachers in order to begin securing the center for a future without Beki and Dawn. We have 2 team leaders, an Afternoon supervisor, and a Developmentally Appropriate Practice Coordinator. HWG has been receiving grants since 2020 from the federal and state levels, and have finally been able to raise staff wages to a more acceptable wage. Understanding that these grants are temporary, Here We Grow has been budgeting and has established a savings account specifically to insure that money is available to continue to pay these competitive wages for an estimated 5 years after the grants are no longer available. The hope continues that one day HWG teachers will receive better wages, and good benefits, including health insurance and retirement benefits currently provided for church staff through the ELCA.

## HERE WE GROW--HISTORY TIME LINE

October 2001

Dawn Zirtzlaff, Beki Tetzlaff, Sherri Biocic introduce the possibility of starting a preschool and childcare center in the Living Hope Building to Pastor Marilyn. Dawn, Beki & Sherri then met with the church council to discuss the details. The council approves the idea and then the congregation is introduced to the idea and preliminary plans. Eventually a vote is taken and the plan is approved for Living Hope to open a school and call it Here We Grow Preschool & Childcare Center and work begins on getting the center in place. Here We Grow is established as a mission of Living Hope and is owned through LH with the same EIN number and tax exempt status.

Many supportive parents, and IH members help by donating of their time, talents, materials and equipment

Living Hope allocates to Here We Grow \$10,000 for start up costs. Here We Grow was able to replenish the account within the first year.

November 2001 Here We Grow Preschool and Childcare Center receives a Child Care License from the State of Wisconsin, the center is licensed for 48 children ages 6 weeks through 6 years old, Monday-Friday from 6:30am-6:00pm

By the grace of God we were repeatedly blessed with the ease in which the licensing process and opening of Here We Grow came to be.

December 3, 2001 Here We Grow opens four classrooms in the existing Living Hope building. A board of Directors is formed to oversee the business.

June 2002, Pastor Marilyn writes the grant to the Siebert Foundation. HWG/LH receives a \$10,500 grant in the fall of 2002 from the foundation for additional equipment and materials. Here We Grow grows quickly, in 2002 an additional toddler classroom was opened, classroom space was rearranged in fellowship hall for 3 classrooms.

Growth continues within both the Church and school and the need for school age care for current families and the community, are made known. Here We Grow creates a reputation in the community for being a high quality child care & preschool. The center's enrollment is consistently full and advertising for child care is not necessary.

In 2004 Living Hope Church and Here We Grow, begin the planning process for adding additional space to be known as the educational wing for the school and church programming including Sunday school, Vacation Bible school and youth programs. Also in 2004 Sherri Biocic resigned and Beki & Dawn take on her former job responsibilities.

Committee's were formed, the congregation, council and Here We Grow families and staff worked together to make this dream a reality. Ground breaking was held on Sept 11, 2005.

April 2006 Here We Grow moves into the new 6 classroom addition while continuing to use a classroom in the original building for a total of 7 classrooms. In addition, the education wing was used year round for Living Hope's programming of Sunday School, Youth Groups, Vacation Bible School etc. Here We Grow continues to use the fellowship hall for "Summer Camp" for school age children.

Here We Grow and Living Hope had many years of combined planned events, picnics, JAM fests, and vacation bible school. Much of the planning and work is shared between LH & HWG. After several changes in staffing and pastors-this part of the mission begins to dwindle. There is some rejuvenation when Trunk or Treat and the Easter Egg hunt become regular events, planned and lead by a HWG teacher who is also a LH member.

2018 Star room classrooms had some remodeling and construction done to connect the hallway bathroom into the existing classroom. Also a sink is added in the classroom space. An additional infant room is established to accommodate the growing need for infant care.

2020 Here We Grow is deemed essential and remains open for families in need of care during the covid pandemic. Over the course of the pandemic most families either stayed or returned after 6-12 months time on a leave of absence agreement. This was the beginning of a major teacher shortage for most child care centers in Wisconsin and the country. The state begins a Child Care Counts grant program, and HWG applies on a monthly basis for grant money.

2022-2023 The child care staffing shortage continues, HWG makes adjustments to enrollment limits, and classrooms arrangements. Fall of 2023 HWG is consistently fully staffed for the first time in over 5 years.