

Palm Valley Lutheran Church
May 20, 2026 Council Minutes

Attendees: Susan Ames (Secretary), Jane Baxter, David Beck, Kathy Erwin, JB Getz, Barry Hamilton, Anita Hulsman, Jen Kendrick (Executive Administrator), Carolyn Koehn, Pastor Dave Koppel, Linda Reed, Sue Rue (Vice-President), Rick Salvo, Dave Smith (President), Mary Wallin
Guests: Joy Kovar, Deborah Franke

Opening business (agenda, devotion, consent)

Dave Smith opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

- The opening prayer was offered by Pastor Koppel.
- Sue Rue motioned and Carolyn Koehn seconded to approve the agenda as written. **The motion carried.**
- Devotion/readings were shared by Rick Salvo from Philippians 1:3–11, emphasizing love, knowledge, insight, and discerning what is best.
- Carolyn Koehn motioned and Sue Rue seconded to approve the Consent Agenda. **The motion carried.**
- Dave Smith clarified procedures for the online minutes approval process.
 - The minutes will first be sent out to council members for edits for three days.
 - The minutes will be edited and sent to the Council. Three days will be given for Council Members to vote for or against approval of the minutes.
 - The approved minutes will then be posted on the church website.

Ministry & staff reports highlights

- Pastor clarified new member class membership report: 17 people attended the class; 12 new members joined.
- Update on “Lax” - He is still without a call due to green card delays. The timeline has been pushed back again.
- Adult confirmation begins next Tuesday evening with four candidates ages range from 17 to 22. The plan is to fit information into five sessions.
- Youth/children summer programming: The staff will be busy with VBS, day camp, away camp, and other summer activities. Barry Hamilton explained the “Traveling camp” concept for middle schoolers. It will include trips and activities (e.g., zoo; possible cave visit) with faith focus.
- We will be hosting a youth group from North Carolina on June 23rd–24th. Host home boys and girls will be housed separately. They will be served dinner at church and the host family will provide breakfast. The group will then travel to their next destination.
- Preschool enrollment question: Several students moved on to higher education and currently about 8–9 students remain. The leadership felt it’s too early to be concerned due to families are focused on the end of school. Preschool Director, Becky Simpson reported there have been many inquiries and tours.

Cemetery/groundskeeper compensation clarification

- Discussion revisited stipends related to cemetery work (urn interment/columbarium access).
 - Clarified that extra pay is handled as a taxed stipend through payroll.
- Columbaria opening/digging an urn hole:
 - If work is done during normal work hours, it's part of the job.
 - If work is done after hours, a stipend applies (noted as \$150).
 - Request was made to edit clarify the job description and stipend conditions so it's not confusing in future.

Property, finance, and major updates

- Property team recognition: The Council commended John Reed and Dwayne Kostiha for their work on the Property Team this past month.
- Gas line under sanctuary: Is "in the works" timing is being coordinated with new HVAC units.

Property Updates - Jen Kendrick

- Parsonage roof was started April 23 and rotted wood, holes and thin decking was discovered. An online emergency council vote approved \$11k additional from unrestricted funds.
- The Sanctuary carpet and paint is complete. Sue Rue reported the pew cushion project is ongoing. The original fabric vendor went bankrupt and new fabric was selected.
- Jen Kendrick reported the AV/lighting project in the sanctuary and the CLC is underway. The electricians and Brown Note are working to avoid Sunday worship disruptions. Time to completion is estimated to be 1 month.
- Two completed Eagle projects: flagpoles by soccer field and memorial garden.
 - Flagpoles: A concern was raised about poles bending in wind. The poles are designed to be flexible. Jen Kendrick will double-check with the scout and his dad concerning the width and height of the poles and the size of the flag.
 - Carolyn Koehn suggested the council and GRACE teams start building a list of potential Eagle Scout projects to share with future scouts. Ideas included dog park phased projects, field improvements, preschool outdoor items, and possible pickleball conversion.

Attendance:

- Easter day 500+ across services
- April was the 11th straight month higher than prior year. The One Voice/confirmation service in-person count was 284.

Financials (Jan–Apr YTD):

- Jen Kendrick reported contributions January - April are slightly above budget. April alone was about \$10k under budget.
 - Plan to send mid-year giving statements in July to increase awareness and catch miscoding.
- The rental timing communication issues were corrected. Additional income is down a little due to some timing of our rental payments and lower than budgeted building actual

building use. Communication has happened with all of our renters and everybody's catching up. We should be in good shape for May.

- Expenses generally held close to budget.

Key decisions: staff raises, audit firm, endowment grants

- Staff raises / ERC funds discussion was lengthy due to confusion created by a published “Echoes” note implying 9% raises. Council located prior guidance in the December packet from November council meeting stating salary increases are 50% COLA / 50% merit-based.
- Vince Brunssen motioned and Rick Salvo seconded that Palm Valley Lutheran Church budget a total compensation adjustment pool of **up to 9.0% for 2026** for eligible staff. **The motion carried with the following clarification.**
 - Carolyn Koehn clarified the compensation pool is intended to be allocated as follows:
 - **4.5%** for a general **cost-of-living adjustment (COLA)** for eligible employees to help address inflationary impacts and maintain market competitiveness.
 - The remaining portion of the pool for **differentiated merit-based increases**, recognizing individual performance, leadership contribution, role impact, and overall effectiveness during the 2025 review period.
 - Merit increases will not be distributed equally across all employees and will instead reflect varying levels of contribution and performance relative to role expectations and organizational needs.
 - The total compensation adjustments approved across all employees will **not exceed the overall 9.0% compensation budget authorized for 2026.**
 - All compensation adjustments remain subject to final approval through Palm Valley Lutheran Church’s established personnel and budget approval processes.

Audit firm selection:

- Council discussed the tiers of an audit.
- Timing concerns due to onboarding a new finance hire were discussed and the heavy lifting will fall on Jodie and Jen Kendrick.
- The audit will likely have a summer or early early fall start.
- Carolyn Koehn motioned and David Beck seconded to select Ratliff & Associates (bundle including DAS + full audit per discussion). **The motion carried.**

Endowment/Trinity Place grants:

- Rick Salvo motioned and Linda Reed seconded to approve the 2026 grant recommendations as submitted by the endowment committee. New requests totaling about \$161k and overall pull will be approximately \$353k.
 - Some grants are multi-year/recurring;
 - Sacred Heart Community Clinic was noted as an exception needing annual reapproval.
 - Community feedback was shared about a large grant to a church in India. Council noted prior discussion and historic global support to El Salvador and Grenada.
 - Next steps for grant disbursements: Jen Kendrick will review timing needs and likely disburse in multiple tranches instead of one lump sum. Outreach to recipients is planned in early June with amounts and expected timing.

Next meetings and reminders

Next month's early/late CICs and devotion assignments mentioned

Grace Night: June 1 Dave Smith encouraged higher council attendance.

Next council meeting: June 17 at 6:30; executive committee meets beforehand.

Sue Rue motion and everyone seconded for the meeting to be adjourned. **The motion carried.**

Meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer at 8:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Ames (Council Secretary)

May 22, 2026

The minutes were approved by unanimous digital vote. 05/26/2026