

Little Blessings Preschool Committee Emergency Meeting

July 16, 2026

AI-Generated Minutes

Quick recap

The Little Blessings Preschool (LBPS) committee met to discuss the financial and operational challenges facing the Madison campus. Rick and Heidi presented financial data showing significant deficits in recent years and low enrollment for the upcoming summer and fall, which would result in a projected \$34,000 shortfall. The committee considered three scenarios: continuing with reduced staff, transitioning to a part-time preschool model, or closing the campus. After discussion, the committee unanimously recommended closing the Madison campus of Little Blessings effective August 28, 2026. They also discussed the need to offer placement options for the affected children at the Verona campus, if possible, and to communicate the closure decision to parents and the congregation.

Summary

Little Blessings Financial Challenges

The meeting began with casual conversation about weather and travel before transitioning to a discussion about financial challenges at Little Blessings preschool. Heidi and Rick explained that due to lower than expected enrollment for summer and fall, the preschool is facing significant debt that may exceed their financial capacity. The discussion was cut short as they were preparing to review financial documents to present the current options and situation to the committee.

Little Blessing Madison Program Financial Review

Rick presented financial data for Little Blessing's Madison program over the past three fiscal years, noting that while the program lost money in fiscal years 2024 and 2026, state grants helped mitigate the deficits. The current enrollment is significantly lower than projected, with only 1.8 students per day on average during summer and expected to reach only 2 in fall, falling short of the estimated 7.6 students needed to meet the \$56,000 budget target. Due to the financial shortfall, the team discussed reducing staff to Heidi and a part-time teacher starting September 1st, though they are considering making a final coordinated marketing push to increase enrollment.

Mailing Issues and Teaching Structure

Rick and Deni discussed issues with a mailing that appeared to not reach the intended audience, with no QR codes being opened and potential postal service errors. They reviewed two scenarios for moving forward: maintaining the current single-teacher model or transitioning to a two-teacher setup with part-time positions. The conversation highlighted challenges with the current model's financial viability and considered reverting to a pre-COVID structure with morning-only programming and two part-time teachers.

Little Blessings Program Closure Options

Rick discussed three scenarios for the Little Blessings Madison program, including potentially converting it to a preschool model, which would reduce expenses by \$23,000 but still result in a \$12,000 loss. He explained that closing the facility as of August 31st would avoid a significant black mark on state licensing, though some impact might remain if reopening within a year. The group decided to present the closure option to the full board for discussion at their meeting on Tuesday night, with parent notification scheduled for July 22nd if the recommendation moves forward.

Child Care Program Planning

Rick discussed scenarios for managing two 4-year-old children in the fall, including one child needing full-day care and another requiring part-time care. He proposed two options: transferring the children to Linda's program with potential assistance from Jennifer, or working with a Lutheran church center that has space for both children up to age 5. Rick noted that transferring to Linda's program would require Verona approval and potentially adding another program assistant, while the Lutheran center option would involve providing the church with contact information and rates.

Student Transfer Options Discussion

Rick discussed options for handling additional students, with the primary proposal being to transfer them to Verona. He mentioned that while Linda prefers not to add more staff, they could potentially bring in a part-time teacher who had previously been considered for Madison but couldn't work out due to family circumstances. Marie inquired about the student's residency status, and Rick confirmed they were Madison students who had been with the program since age two and a half. Deni expressed support for bringing the students to Verona rather than using an LCMS church program.

Program Closure and Student Placement

The group discussed the potential closure of a program and debated offering students a spot at the Verona location as the primary option. Deni emphasized that if they decide to shut down the program, they should commit to finding space for each child at Verona, with flexibility for parental preferences regarding location and traffic. Kelsie agreed with this approach but noted the need for swift action if closure is announced next week, and suggested exploring alternative preschool options as a backup if Verona is not feasible. Rick offered to research other ELCA preschools in the area, including St. James, as potential alternatives.

Program Closure Discussion Meeting

The group discussed the potential closure of a program, focusing on challenges with current enrollment and logistics. Rick mentioned that only one child's parent works at Grace Episcopal, and noted that finding alternative options would be difficult as no other Lutheran church offers a similar program. The team agreed to recommend program closure to the board and explore alternative options for the remaining families, with Rick planning to investigate if a 4-year-old child could be accommodated and provide families with other childcare options before making a final decision.

Preschool Program Transition Planning

The group discussed plans for managing a preschool program transition, with Rick suggesting a deadline of early August for parents to make decisions about their children's enrollment. Deni and Kelsie agreed that giving parents sufficient notice was important, especially since some families are already aware of potential changes. The discussion included considerations about consulting with Linda and the teachers

about adding more students to the program, particularly given the 4K component and current staffing constraints. Rick indicated he would speak with Skiba first to determine if the 4K program would proceed, which would affect whether additional conversations with Linda and the teachers would be necessary.

Preschool Space Planning Discussion

The group discussed space availability for a preschool program, with Kelsie confirming there are enough cubbies and seating spots for the current number of children. They identified a potential scheduling conflict for two children attending only on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, as the Verona program operates on different days (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday through Friday). The committee agreed to offer available space to current families while acknowledging that not all needs could be fully met, and decided that if the program were to close, August 28th would be the logical date for the announcement, giving families about five weeks notice.

Madison Campus Closure Planning

The committee discussed closing the Madison campus of Little Blessings and agreed on a motion to recommend closure effective August 28, 2026. Emily will move the motion and Kelsie will second it at the board meeting. The group decided to notify parents via email, Brightwheel, and a physical letter, with the goal of informing them before August 24th to allow time for alternative arrangements. Rick noted that while there is a \$4,150 gap, the closure would actually be financially positive for the church due to reduced salaries.

4. Items of Importance/Concern for the Board of Directors

5. Requests for Board Direction

6. Requests for Board Approval

None.

7. Attachments

None.

Next steps

Heidi

- [Notify parents of the Madison campus closure via Brightwheel, email, and physical letter, with a personal phone call to the 4-year-old families.](#)
- [Work with Rick to identify and offer alternative care options \(Verona program or other preschools\) to affected families.](#)

Rick

- [Contact Jennifer Skiba to determine if the 4K student can be placed in the Verona program and what the process/timeline would be.](#)
- [Update the scenario document for the board, removing scenario 2 and clarifying current state vs. recommendation.](#)

- Draft a letter to parents regarding the closure, to be sent from Paul, and coordinate with Heidi on communication.
- Communicate the closure decision and recommendation to the full church board at their meeting on July 22nd.
- Ensure that the congregation is informed about the closure after parents have been notified, potentially through the church Messenger.
- Finalize the end of service date for Heidi, between August 31st and September 30th, to assist with winding down operations.
- Extend a job offer to the preferred part-time teacher candidate for the Verona program, if needed to accommodate additional students.