

**SAINT LUCAS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
June 24, 2024, 6:00 pm - Zoom Hybrid/Room 19**

*(This meeting was called to order at *6:20 pm by Vice-President, Katy Forand.)*

MEMBERS PRESENT: Phil Denton, Marsha Fey, Katy Forand, Kathy Herron/Zoom, Donovan Larson, and Barbara Smith. || Six members. *(Absent - Violet Brooks, Wanda Gillman, and Marty Schmidt)*

VISITORS PRESENT: *None - “Technical Difficulties”. (A passcode was not attached to the Zoom link.)

STAFF PRESENT: Rev. Merrimon Boyd/ex-officio via Zoom, and Rev. Janet Pillman/ex-officio in Room 19.

OPENING PRAYER: The meeting was opened with a prayer by Kathy Herron.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- A/V Committee - May 28, 2024, Minutes
- Cemetery Board - May 15, 2024, Minutes
- Council Meeting - May 20, 2024, Minutes
- Finance Ministry - May 21, 2024, Minutes
- Preschool Board - April 23, 2024, Minutes
 - (5) *REPORTS*

Barbara moved to accept and Phil seconded that the June 24, 2024 Consent Agenda be received as submitted. The motion was approved unanimously.

GUEST COMMENTS: Bill Biedenstein attended the meeting to continue the conversation that was initiated in the Semi-Annual meeting in May. The Trustees received some input at that meeting. But now Bill is asking for input from the Council on two specific aspects of the P.E.T. As a Council, we do have access to the document via Debbie in the office. Building “political will” is needed before the November Annual meeting. This needs to come from the Council and church members. Therefore two areas specifically need to be addressed: (1) Changing the trust document -the indenture- to amend the wording to read as “20% of income to 100% of income” on an annual basis instead of “20% of income to 80% of income”. A wording change would require it to be posted a minimum of two weeks *before* the annual meeting. (If that’s the will of the Council, and if the Council feels it would be the will of the congregation.) If so, 2/3rds of those in attendance at the annual meeting would need to agree with the amended wording. The benefit of this would be an estimated increase in income of \$20K annually. The other item (2), is for the church Council to recommend the change of wording for the entire trust document, i.e. “decant” the P.E.T. The trustees are not promoting this. But it is an option that the church can look into. That is an action that would not be done by the trustees but rather initiated by the Council. Bill has had many discussions with Marty on this topic. But he’s asking for input from the rest of the Council as well.

Donovan asked if we are talking about an “either/or” here. Or, are we talking about a combination? Increasing to 100% would be option one and decanting would be option two. Bill responded “And/or... option one, option two, or either one or both or none.”

Phil advised that he wants to study the document intensely before next month’s meeting in order to prepare his final conclusion. In the meantime here are his thoughts:

- The 20% of income to 100% change may sound wonderful. However, if all of our money is invested in equities, you’ll get zero income. If capital gains are realized (or unrealized), they can’t be considered under the existing trust as income. He is “leery of that” without something else in place.

- Marty's plan which was shared with the Council is a plan Phil would endorse. It was well thought out. Saying that X% should be realized by the church is the way to go because that's how most people's retirement accounts are set up. Most general endowments (i.e. universities, etc.) are structured the same way. You're striving to accomplish your mission while not burning through your principal. It's vital to stay aware of the principal.
- "Not distributing capital... to realize capital gains is overly restrictive." Phil thinks that provision should be removed. He thinks to accomplish our mission we need more flexibility. "Sometimes there are equities you just want to sell and you want to get the income from. It's a good way to earn money. It's not a perfect way. But if smart decisions are made it's much more than an interest-bearing or dividend-paying account, which is what we're limited to now... dividends/interest. That's all we get, and that's considered income."

Bill asked Phil if the following is what he heard Phil say: "Decanting or re-writing the trust to allow for a different distribution is better than what we currently have." Phil answered, "Correct."

Phil then stated, "I would love to avoid a decanting if possible. I'm going to look at that language. There is language in this trust that permits the congregation to make changes to the management of the funds. I want to see just how restrictive that language is."

Katy then asked if the decanting process is a "judge-issued" process... i.e. it would not be a quick/short turnaround to complete. Phil replied, "Yes", and continued that under Missouri law the trustees of the trust have to initiate it.

They would have to file the petition and propose what they want and the reasons for that. The judge would then determine if those are reasonable requests. Conservatively, he feels we'd be looking at least 12 months to complete. The waiting is typically due to the court dockets.

Donovan commented that these are all things the congregation will need to know in advance. Katy added especially if they're thinking we'll gain a specific amount of money in a quick amount of time.

At the Semi-Annual meeting, Kathy understood there would be Council Conversations to assist the congregation with understanding this concept. She also understood the congregation to ask for scenarios such as "What would happen if...?" It would be helpful to have these ideas written down so they'd have references about this topic.

Barbara agreed with Kathy and she feels Marty has Council Conversations planned for the upcoming weeks. However, in the interim, she's hearing that the trustees want to know how tonight's Council members feel about this prospect. As a layperson concerning finances, Barbara shared her opinion that if there are benefits to be gained under *current* trust laws, our hands should not be tied with outdated regulations from 40+ years ago.

Bill added that if changes are to be made, they should be made with the spirit and intention of the draftsmen of that original document. Barbara agreed. Bill continued that we do have something in place now -the general endowment- that could serve as a model for potential language changes to the P.E.T.

Bill's concern is to get input from the Council and church members to secure the "political will" needed to allow a positive movement that will not turn divisive.

Donovan admitted it makes good sense. He continued by stating the biggest roadblock we could have is if people come to the Annual Meeting and not understand the question. And rather than move forward they'd decide *not* to do anything.

Bill agreed stating he thinks that's exactly what Kathy is talking about. Perhaps preparing a document with FAQs or "what if" scenarios would be helpful.

Marsha interjected that the Finance Committee had information from their June meeting which Jack Laudenslager shared which didn't seem as daunting as what we're hearing tonight. Their June minutes may reflect that next month. Katy suggested having some of the Finance Committee members plus P.E.T. Trustees available for future Council Conversations to help church members understand what the goal is to be with a P.E.T. update. Marsha offered that Jack has a lot of information to share regarding the P.E.T. and decanting. However, since Marsha arrived late to that financial meeting last week she is not able to explain it as satisfactorily tonight. She stated the way Jack described it seemed to allow for an easier understanding of what the changes to P.E.T. could result in.

Phil shared that he gave Marty a copy of Missouri's Decanting Statutes, in addition to some articles on that topic. Barbara asked if we have someone experienced in this type of work lined up to help us, i.e. a trust attorney. Marsha and Bill answered "Yes" that Jack had been in contact with someone. That person advised them the language used in our 40-year-old trust is very typical of what was used back then. Marsha's understanding is that others have gone through this process to update their language/trust. There is a precedent available to us.

Bill's current interpretation of the congregation's concern is the underlying fear of having the principal of the investment portfolio invaded. Bill's personal opinion is that is not on the table.

After over 25 minutes this discussion continued with comments about weighing the measures to update, enhance, or achieve the best results from the trust. While also giving Bill some of the answers he was looking for from the Council. Phil will continue his review of the document before next month. As sitting members of the Finance Committee, Marty and Wanda will undoubtedly have more input to share with the group in July. Bill then excused himself from the meeting.

STAFF REPORTS:

Pastor Janet - She delivered her report verbally to the group. She took the opportunity to share her favorite moments and her least favorite moments at St. Lucas UCC.

- Favorites -
 - The Pet Blessing.
 - She can tell she is reaching people when looking out from the pulpit.
 - Linda Radick's Preludes and the way she plays the piano. She is a very gifted musician and a blessing to this congregation. If she had a say in permanent practices here she would wish for everyone to stay seated and listen to Linda's Postludes. She feels so many are missing out on her wonderful arrangements because they are leaving the sanctuary or talking with friends.
- Least Favorite -
 - Her fall/accident at the Greek Festival. She still has such guilt over this episode. She knows she shouldn't because it was an accident. Yet, it was a scary and tough event. She felt the love and prayers from everyone here. She feels it was a big contributing factor to her quick healing!
- A Question from her -
 - She received a good response from St. Lucas to her Sodom & Gomorrah sermon. She recently came across a sermon she did for the Unitarian church regarding Gay issues. That sermon is primarily about scripture in the New Testament with some from the Old Testament. She doesn't want to push it but she's wondering if she should share that sermon or not broach the topic. As a member of the ONA Task Force Barbara would welcome it. However, she is only one person in the room. Pastor Janet asked if this subject had been touched on. The answer was yes.
 - Donovan added that Pastor Vicki shared her thoughts on the topic. She recommended the Unclobbered book as a good reference and pathway for the church. Donovan feels it is a discussion we should have.

- Marsha observed that her Sodom & Gomorrah sermon came across as a Bible study. More educational than judgmental. Pastor Janet responded that her sermon about being Gay would be presented in the same manner.
- Phil added that if it's Bible-based he has no objection.
- Katy added the way you deliver your sermons have always come across as educational and thought-provoking.
- Pastor Janet shared that it makes her angry when the Bible is used as a weapon when it's not even justified. Plus going to Eden Seminary her education involved dissecting passages and scripture.
- Barbara added it would be a good addition considering we will be welcoming a new minister to St. Lucas who is gay. It could be beneficial for him concerning some in the congregation may still have questions on this topic.
- She also confessed that she's been doing more work from home as she works better on her own computer rather than the church's laptop. By the same token, as she is only temporary she knows she is not responsible for staff. Yet she wants us to be aware that she has been tracking her time. She's been averaging 21 hours/week vs her 20 hours/week expected hours. She feels good about that, especially since she missed some time due to her accident.
- Regarding hospital visits, those she has contacted did not want her to visit while they were in-patient. Although she was able to call on a few people once they were discharged to home. Plus Merrimon was able to graciously take over for a funeral very soon after she arrived which she appreciated. She has been made aware of a few on Hospice, although nothing has developed on that front.
- As an FYI, she wanted the Council to be aware of her decision to decline a baptism for a family who has parents within our church but the children and grandchild live out of state and are not part of St. Lucas. She has difficulty with this since she doesn't know the grandparents or the children/grandchild. In addition, the dialogue expressed during baptism is that the parents will agree to raise their child in the church. However, in this instance, the parents have no church affiliation. Plus Pastor Janet prefers to establish a relationship before whomever she baptizes. She suggested to the family perhaps they wait for Pastor George's arrival (since they have waited this long already) to have this performed.
- Pastor Janet would also like to ask to have her salary reduced by \$2K. She feels it would be a Win-Win. It would help her with her tax situation while also helping the church to save a small expense. (*Her way of "tithing"*.) Is that doable? The Council will verify this with Jeff, but it seems it should just be a revision to her agreement. They will research it and get back to her.
- (Is there anything else she should be aware of as feedback?) All the comments this Council expressed to Pastor Janet were positive, upbeat, and thankful for her presence and guidance these past weeks.

Pastor Merrimon - Tomorrow the UCC is celebrating its 67th birthday. He also added that he too listens to Pastor Janet's sermons and has enjoyed Pastor Janet's stories. He is completing a series of "Worship Ways" using the context of Mark's gospel on Saturday nights. That will end on June 29th. He's been getting good feedback during the dinner hour on Saturday nights. Also, regarding the baptismal Pastor Janet referred to, Pastor Merrimon will be performing a baby blessing on July 27th. Plus, Merrimon has been in discussion with Peggy Sappington about having a family graveside service on July 24th.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Financial Secretary, Wanda Gillman was on vacation this evening. In her absence, Barbara Smith read Wanda's Financial Report for May 2024 -

- The regular offering for May was \$35,014.25. This offering amount is under budget for the month by \$9,985.75.

- The total expenses for May were \$73,020.68. This expense amount is under budget by \$16,637.95.
- The deficit for this month is (\$15,647.95).
- There was a gift of extra income amount of \$ 10,080.00 from the Gildehaus Donation and Associates luncheon.
- The only extra spending this month was for lawn care and a port-a-potty for two months in the amount of \$2,222.00.
- The Finance Committee has started the 2025 budget process.
- We had a very lengthy conversation about the Endowment Committee's presentation planned for the Semi-Annual Meeting.

Please contact her directly with any questions. Respectfully submitted by Wanda Gillman, Finance Secretary.

Marsha commented that she is still unclear about where electronic giving is posted. Marsha has asked Jeff about it and he will be adding a line item for it.

Katy offered that electronic giving is different from Venmo. Perhaps two line items need to be added to the income side of our financial reports.

Physical Facilities Ministries:

Due to his recent vacation out of state, there was not a Facilities meeting this month. Nor did Donovan participate in the recent Finance Committee meeting. However, the following information is what he can provide to the Council about the Physical Facilities Ministries:

- The sealing and the painting of the parking lot have been completed and paid for.
 - The number of handicapped spots are what is dictated due to County codes.
- Dan Herron noticed some water running under the newly sealed pavement on the north lot. He brought it to Donovan's attention. That issue is something that will be ongoing. That portion of the pavement sits on a wet substrate. When it rains that substrate fills and water runs toward the basin. It is something that will always react that way. It's not something we can solve without a major drainage project.
- The roofing work is complete, except for the flat roof over the Preschool which was not identified until they were almost finished with the church roof. Their bid for that work is \$21,600 as long as there are no sloping issues they need to address. That will not be determined until they begin the job. It will begin once Glandt's calendar opens up. Kathy asked if we ever followed up with our insurance carrier to determine if the Preschool roof leaks were the result of the April 18th storm. Donovan will check with Jeff about that.
 - Along that topic, Charlie reported a leaking toilet in the preschool on the second floor. Upon closer inspection, Donovan suspects the leak could be a result of the roof leaks. He will review it again to determine if it's still a problem once the roofing work is complete.
- The Kitchen dishwasher is still under study by he and Bob Beck. They feel it is a pump problem since the pressure is lower than what it used to be. They are hoping to replace it with a used model rather than replace it with a current new model of that version.
- The sanctuary carpet was cleaned a few weeks ago, front to back even though the front was cleaned one year ago. Hopefully, that will last for a few years.
- There is interest in tiling the carpeted area outside the office and elevators. Some people feel it needs to be replaced. Donovan intends to secure a bid with the same flooring product laid in the Social Hall. Depending on the bid amount will determine if the work is to be completed.
- Donovan has installed hymnal holders on the very back rows of the front sections of the pews. The intent is to allow easy access for people who use wheelchairs/walkers.

- Regarding the bell that was in the garage that used to be in our church's schoolhouse in 1910, he met with the Sappington Historical Society. They are not interested in it due to the size. Katy suggested contacting Lindbergh Schools for the AG/STEM building in the Concord Farmers Club. Phil also offered that the City of Sunset Hills may have some interest in it.
- Related to Sunset Hills, Donovan had received information to say there was a vehicle "doing donuts" on our sports fields. Neither the police nor Donovan could find any evidence or vehicle to confirm that.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS:

- Kathy reported on all of the activities she and Dan are involved with in Church... Caring Ministry, Membership, Prayer Groups, Little Free Pantry, Tuesday Coffee Hour, etc.
- Phil reported he was recently told that he should not be collecting the Friendship pads at the end of the service. He was told that is the job of the ushers. As a Council member, he should not have been involved in that task. A short discussion followed about this topic. Barbara will check for the location of the Ushers Training Manual. Kathy offered that things are not quite the same in many areas since back from CoVid. Katy and Donovan suggested perhaps an audit of the duties of offering collection vs. attendance count needs to be performed. Or perhaps a new manual needs to be written so everyone can be on the same page. Barbara will check in with Terry Marcille.

OLD BUSINESS:

>Nominating Team Update - Kathy invited Maddie Prewitt to join the Nominating Committee, and she accepted. Fay Schneider will get back to Kathy with her answer. Juanita Wagner declined Kathy's offer. Kathy needs to circle back to Linda Taylor for her answer.

Marsha has spoken with Ann Rohr, and Mike & Mary Kay Bohn. She stressed to them their work would take place Sept/Oct-ish. She has also approached Cathy Viehman and Steve Kienzler. No one has told her no. Although she will get back to them for confirmation. Marsha also intends to speak with Sandy Heine. She and Kathy hope to get a minimum of three helpers for this task. Marsha has stressed this is a defined, short-term position.

>Land Use Task Force - Still tabled until further notice.

>Worship Area Changes - Still tabled until we can receive input from Pastor George after his arrival.

>Other Old Business - There was none.

NEW BUSINESS:

>Council Corners & Council Communications - Katy would like to discuss how the Council communicates with one another and also how information is communicated to the church on behalf of the Council. She has been approached by members questioning information that has been shared in recent eBlasts. There have been instances where the information shared was "not helpful" with the most recent eBlast resulting in this. Katy feels hesitant to discuss this topic without Marty present. However, we need to be thinking about a policy where more than just one set of eyes review information before it is released. Whether that be the Senior Pastor or other Council Members. She feels there was premature information published. She feels Marty's intent is full transparency. Yet, in the future, she feels something should be in place to identify information shared by the Council when the viewpoint is of the entire Council or one individual.

Barbara commented this may be a result of the interim time without a senior pastor in place. Pastor Vicki was always available and would not hesitate to offer her opinion on a proposed topic.

Katy reiterated she feels bad for discussing this without Marty present. Yet she's received many calls after the most recent eBlast was released with the concern of members. She took "the brunt of it" this week.

Marsha offered that she feels the content of those eBlasts are much too long and involved for a simple eBlast format. Donovan asked what other method we should use. Marsha replied perhaps a separate email to the congregation. Perhaps a letter format.

Katy added that especially when it comes to this topic. A separate letter/email would be warranted so it's not lost in the weekly information of an eBlast. She feels that it would be a good practice going forward. She feels it may have been harmful and confusing to the topic at hand. Some staff indicated concern about budget cuts to her. Merrimon agreed.

Kathy suggested if he doesn't share the information with us before it is published perhaps Marty should sign only his name to the information.

Katy just wanted to bring the topic up for review. Nothing will be done without Marty's input. Yet she wanted to make the Council aware of what she's experienced this past week. Katy wanted to share the need to review overall communication within the Council moving forward.

Merrimon suggested creating a Video Message. The benefit of this is the viewer can listen to it over and over again as needed. An added benefit is it can be included in the eBlast. Katy agreed as she has a friend in Kansas City whose pastor does that very thing. Especially with Pastor George and yourself being advocates of Social Media, this is something worth considering.

Katy asked if there was any other New Business to discuss. (There was none.)

Without any further discussion, the ministers were released from the meeting and the Council moved into an Executive Session.

*This now ended the Public Session of the June 24, 2024 Council meeting.

(Minute marker: 1 hour/51 minutes)

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Smith,
Recording Secretary

NOTE - the next regular Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 22nd at 6:00 p.m.