

**SAINT LUCAS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CHURCH COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 26, 2024, 6:00 pm - Zoom Hybrid/Room 19**

*(This meeting was called to order at *6:04 pm by President, Marty Schmidt.)*

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

VISITORS PRESENT: Marsha Armentrout/Zoom, Bill Brinkhorst & Joy Dressel/Zoom, Bill Biedenstien/Zoom, Joan & Kirk Dalgaard/Zoom, Pat Fribis/Zoom, Ken Hamilton/Zoom, Ellen Littleton/Zoom, Paul Litzinger/Zoom, and Terry Petrovic/Zoom. || Eleven Zoom Visitors.

STAFF PRESENT: Rev. George Miller, Senior Minister, *(Bridge Minister Rev. Merrimon Boyd/Absent)*

OPENING PRAYER: The meeting was opened with a prayer by Katy Forand.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- A/V Committee - July 23, 2024, Minutes
- (Council Meeting - July 22, 2024, Minutes) - *Pulled for corrections
- Council Meeting | Executive Session - July 22, 2024, Minutes
- Finance Ministry - July 16, 2024, Minutes
- Membership & Evangelism - August 6, 2024, Minutes - *Moved to 9/23/24 Council packet
 - (3) *REPORTS*

Barbara moved to accept and Wanda seconded that motion for the August 26, 2024 Consent Agenda be received as submitted. The motion was approved unanimously.

GUEST COMMENTS: None.

STAFF REPORTS:

Pastor George - In addition to his written report, Kathy asked Pastor George to give more details about the STAR acronym. The Small Town and Rural Coalition was established in 2018. This group represents small towns and/or rural churches - 67% within the UCC. Pastor George serves as the Secretary of the STAR steering committee. They meet monthly via Zoom.

There were no other questions for Pastor George.

Pastor Merrimon - None/Absent

Denee Bowers - Report included in the Council packet.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Financial Secretary, Wanda Gillman advised the following information for July 2024 -

- The regular offering for July was \$36,100.35.
 - This offering amount is under what was on the budget for the month by \$1,229.65.
- The total income for July was \$74,794.73. It is over budget by \$27,669.22.
 - It is due to the PET distribution of \$28,924.49.
 - The Pre-School building fee of \$4,000.00.
- The total expenses for July were \$100,611.89 which is under the budget by \$1,246.34.
- The deficit for this month is (\$25,817.16).
 - The total deficit for the year is (\$134,986.05).

- This total deficit -YTD- is under the budget deficit amount of \$33,205.82.
- The large amounts that made a huge impact on July's expenses were:
 - The quarterly insurance payment of \$12,566.00.
 - Plus the relocation expenses for Pastor George of \$4,334.57.

In closing, Wanda stated the Finance Committee has created tentative numbers in preparation for the 2025 budget discussion to be held in September.

Phil questioned the amount (\$134,986.05) shown above as “under” budget. He asked Wanda if she intended to say “over” budget. She replied, “Yes, I think you’re right.” Question two from Phil is has the committee determined a projection of what the total 2024 deficit will be? Marty stated nothing definite so far, but the committee feels it will be close to \$200K. Wanda advised the group she has spreadsheet totals for 8/1/23-7/31/24 to discuss with the Finance Committee at their next meeting. She can say “It is turning out better than I thought”.

Marty added that the Finance Committee he attended in July was the “best one” he’s attended since joining the Council. There were ideas shared and a feeling of optimism about how we can overcome some of our issues. Marty is “cautiously optimistic”.

There were no other questions for Wanda regarding the July 2024 figures.

Physical Facilities Ministries:

Due to Donovan Larson’s absence for vacation, he provided the following written status updates for the Council regarding the Physical Facilities Ministries:

August 22, 2024

St. Lucas UCC Physical Facilities Ministry - Status Update of Ongoing Projects

- The Preschool roof repair is complete and insurance may cover the \$21,000 cost.
- The Athletic field rental charges for 2025 are under discussion.
- Exterior security cameras status—no action.
- The “English church” bell is stored in the garage.
 - Offered to Sunset Hills Historical Society.
 - Also reconsidered by St. Lucas Cemetery.
- Replacement of carpet in Welcome Area—hold until 2025.
- Parsonage weatherization application to DNR under discussion.
- Modification of the lit sign in front lawn—costs being obtained.
- The kitchen dishwasher—working but may need replacement.
 - The kitchen faucet was replaced.
- Note: Vandals broke a large amount of glass in the pavilion last month. Cleaned up by Charlie.

*The next Physical Facilities Ministry meeting is Thursday, September 19, 2024, at 2:00 pm

Violet added athletic fields info. Our rental fees are going up slowly. She mentioned they have a new -larger-group starting next year due to some policy changes the Kirkwood Parks department has implemented. Our ball fields are currently in good shape. However the soccer fields -only rented to Lindbergh Schools- may need some additional maintenance before the new season. They have not yet expressed their specific needs to us for that. Violet feels we should expect a long-term contract from Lindbergh if we agree to continue this higher level of maintenance for them. Otherwise, without that, she feels we could spend \$6K on field maintenance and they could walk away after a year. Marty advised via emails between him and Donovan, that he is aware of additional dirt and other items requested... “Is that for the soccer fields?” Violet advised yes. The only phone calls she receives about requests or problems with fields typically come from Lindbergh. Lindbergh is the only soccer contract. If

we do a higher level of maintenance and they “walk away” after a year, then we have lost money on those improvements. Phil added that he and Donovan have discussed being more firm with Lindbergh after last year’s delayed insurance papers and contract payment receipts.

Violet also advised she is still researching providers for outdoor cameras. Katy asked Violet to keep the Preschool Board and the Cemetery Board “in the loop” with any information she receives about outdoor security cameras, as they too will need that hardware.

Marty advised that the tenants in the parsonage have recently found out they qualify for a weatherization grant for their home. It will cost the church nothing. Barbara made a motion to approve their request to pursue that weatherization grant. Kathy seconded the motion. The Council unanimously approved the tenants to pursue that grant.

Regarding our Denny Road sign. Marty inspected our current sign with Bob Beck. Bob has determined a way to change the inner workings of our current sign to allow an electrical marquee sign that can be controlled by remote control. The cost for that improvement is approximately \$4K. It has been submitted to the 2025 budget. A vast improvement to prior quotes over the years of \$30K for a new sign.

Marty shared the request for a new dishwasher in our kitchen at an expense of approximately \$4K. That item has also been submitted for consideration in the 2025 budget. Even with those additions, Marty stated the expected Physical Facilities budget in 2025 will be less than it was in 2024. Bill Brinkhorst shared when he did dishes this week he had to run the dishwasher for a few cycles for the hot water to get up to 125F.

And finally, Pastor George asked for clarification on the dishwasher expense... a brand new one? He offered a suggestion. This is “a perfect example” for an item that is tangible and immediate which people may want to get behind via a “fund-raiser” for a new dishwasher. For that amount of money, he feels people would get on board with contributions. Marty and Wanda advised the budgeted amount is expected to be \$4k in 2025. However, they are not clear if that would be enough money for a full replacement. Marty also feels the same way about the new flooring in the Welcome Center. That too could be a great option for a capital campaign. Pastor George has seen “phenomenal success for kitchen fundraising and carpet fundraising”. Marty suggested we come up with a “fancy name” for the dishwasher and flooring.

There were no other Council questions about this update.

OLD BUSINESS:

>Nominating Committee - Marsha and Kathy will be meeting this Thursday night to continue their work on this committee. Kristi Kienzler, Maddie Prewitt, and Linda Taylor have agreed to work on this committee. Marty will forward the current Council list of names and terms to the committee. In addition, Marsha advised they need one person for P.E.T. thus asking about their meeting schedule and term lengths. Marty advised one five-year term and they meet quarterly. However this year due to bylaw changes and Council requests, there have been more meetings than usual. Although he anticipates that it will get back on track in 2025. Plus, there is one spot open on the Cemetery Board.

>Stewardship - Marty advised there has been some discussion in the Finance Committee meetings about Stewardship. He feels with the arrival of Pastor George, the uptick of returning faces to church services, and the willingness for this to continue in that direction, there is a “groundswell of energy” to move forward with a campaign. Barbara interjected that 163 people attended our services -live and online- this past weekend.

Katy added that October 13th is our day of Clean-up this Fall. She asked that if any of our committees or boards have jobs that need to be completed, to please submit that information to her and Donovan. Marty added that we should consider a mid-winter workday. (“The church could use a deep clean.”) Several items in the sanctuary need

to be done, such as cleaning the pews, moving shorter pews up for wheelchair-bound members, in addition to cleaning the screen that covers the organ pipes. Katy added the Radicks will be playing at church that day. The hope is it may draw younger members to the church, in addition, to possible help with workday chores. The time frame will be the same as last year with a BBQ event after the work timeline is completed.

>P.E.T. - Marty advised we'll need to bring forward to the congregation a vote for a language change to the Bylaws as recommended by the P.E.T. Trustees. The current language has been a "patch" until the trustees could review details of possible decanting into "another vehicle". That patch is to increase the ceiling for income to 100% of the prior year's income. Phil feels the current "patch" is a non-sequitur. Under that premise, you could spend more than 100% of the income. (You said) "up to, no more, nor greater than 100%" which is impossible. If it's 100% of the income, then you don't exceed 100% of the income. Phil suggests changing the limitation on the page after Clause 4 to modify the sentence to read "...in no case shall less than 20% of the annual net income from the trust estate be distributed to the Church Council for said purposes, "PERIOD". Then eliminate the remainder of that sentence. Phil continued to state that he struggles with the language in the P.E.T. under Clause 3 and also later in Clause 6 about securing loans for the reasons stated. He concludes that there shouldn't be any occasion to make a loan against the trust. Phil feels "it's a real gray area that would be subject to challenge." He feels when/if the decanting is performed, it needs to clearly specify the circumstance of when a loan can be made. It needs to spell that out very clearly in any new version. Then finally, Phil shared that the church "cannot invade the principal and not consider realizing capital gains for purposes of income..." that language also needs to be well thought out. It should only be limited to the overall purposes of what the original trust was intended to be.

Marty unmuted Bill Biedenstien, a trustee of P.E.T. for his thoughts on this topic. Bill's first comment was the terms of this trust are complicated. It may be difficult for the Council members to follow what Phil was saying. Bill's second comment is that for the congregation to be behind any possible changes to the trust, he thinks it's important for the Council to first be engaged in this document. The trustees have met with an outside attorney. His name is Tim Anderson. He walked the P.E.T. trustees through the terms of this document. He was helpful with explaining what can be done and what cannot be done to the current document. Bill feels it would be prudent for all of the Council members to be somewhat conversant on its contents. Therefore, he's recommending that a Special Council meeting be held with this attorney. Then, our questions can be answered by a source who is independent of the church and is objective of the trust contents. Marty shared he thinks this is a reasonable request. He will secure the contact information for this attorney to make arrangements for that type of meeting.

>Bylaws Changes - This concerns the prior dissemination of candidate information during the church's recent Search and Call process. He feels that our current wording be modified to reflect that the Search Committee be the sole presenter of all candidate information to the congregation. His reason is that the Council will not know the candidate at all. Plus, he feels the candidate profile should not be presented to the Council as it was last winter. Instead, only the Search Committee should present the specifics about the candidate, such as education, years of experience, outside affiliations, etc. The Council will then be responsible for drafting the call agreement for that candidate. Marty feels as if it was never specifically delineated in our bylaws. It may have saved time with former conversations within the Council. This proposed change will be given to the congregation in November before a vote for approval is requested. Kathy asked for clarification on how the Search Committee was formed. Marty asked the congregation to put forth suggested members to the Council to be part of the Search Committee. The Council put those people together. Then eventually the team was commissioned in church by the congregation. Pastor George commented that our Search Team was a fabulous combination of people. He was able to detect the type of congregation St. Lucas was due to the people contained in our team.

>Land Use Task Force - Marty spoke with a marketing person at Cape Albion, as it was their impression of Marty's request for a conversation. However, that person will be referring Marty's name and number to her boss so Marty can share his proposal with the correct department there. However, he has yet to hear back from someone there. He will send another email to them.

> Worship Area Changes - Major changes are still tabled for now. However, a brief review of the area will occur on Wednesday night to determine immediate, possible minor changes. Pastor George inquired about the old hymnals, "Are both hymnals out in the sanctuary?" The Council's answer was "Yes, we do, now". The reason for his question was Friendship Village people were finding the hymnal pages were not matching what they had available to them. Marty added there are two requests he's heard regarding our services bulletin. One is that we show which hymnal is being used for any given service. The other is to list the weekly events on the bulletin, starting with the current Sunday rather than Monday. Katy asked if it is possible to link the weekly bulletin to the website so that people watching from home have access to it. Pastor George feels that is a good idea and he will recommend it to Denee at their meeting tomorrow.

> Other Old Business - None

NEW BUSINESS:

> Delegates - The reason this topic was modified in the Bylaws was because it used to be an elected position. The bylaws used to state that if you are on Council (an elected position) you cannot hold any other elected position. However, it is often the people on the Council who would like to be engaged in the delegation meetings. Therefore, Marty is bringing this topic to the Council first to determine if any Council member currently wants to be considered as a delegate for the UCC. They will now be assigned for each meeting rather than a term. According to the current Bylaws, we are allowed five delegates plus two additional under the age of 30 because of our current church population. The St. Louis Association Fall meeting will be held at Pilgrim UCC on October 5th. Kathy stated that she and perhaps Dan may be interested. She will have to check their calendar. The Missouri Mid-South Conference will be a Zoom meeting the weekend of October 17-19. For that meeting, we are allowed three delegates and one youth delegate who is less than 18 years old. (Both meetings require the youth delegates to be members. Therefore that would require them to have completed confirmation.) Marty will contact Amy & Lynn to spread the word to our youth members. Plus he'll add a note to our eBlast to recruit adult members for either/both meetings. Kathy clarified for the group, anyone can attend these meetings. However, only the named delegates are allowed to vote at the meetings. Correct.

> Worship and Music Ministry - Pastor Vicky did attempt to form this group, as she found that she was doing a lot of the work that would not be expected of a Sr. Minister. Kathy and Barbara stated there was only one meeting for that attempt. The attendees were Pastor Vicki, Seth, Kathy & Dan, Barbara, and Cathy Forand. No other work was completed after that single meeting. Marty feels we first need to determine what the duties of that group will be. Pastor George stated his style of leadership is to empower those working with him to take ownership of specific tasks. For example, Linda Taylor and Linda Radick know what hymns and anthems are best served by the congregation and choir. Therefore they will choose the intended music for Sunday services. Marty shared that we can create whatever we need to since this is a fairly new endeavor. Pastor George shared it is not a good use of the Senior Minister's energy to have him dictate the minute details involved in a service. Pastor George follows the narrative lectionary which allows Linda (x's 2) to know what the scriptures will be for the entire year. With that, they are following their instincts of what will be needed to complement this. Plus, when Michele follows suit, that is when you see the hand of the Holy Spirit at work. The Lindas are embracing this opportunity given to them. Marty commented that the idea of this committee is a work in progress. Barbara asked if the communion process would fall under this committee as well. Marty replied we will discuss that later on.

> Changes to Usher Responsibilities - Two items: One lighting the altar candles and extinguishing those candles. Two, the resumption of passing the offering plates. Marty asked about the progress regarding the update of the Usher Manual. Kathy and Joy shared that along with Terry they attempted to update the Usher Manual after Covid as many of the processes changed. Joy remembers Terry advising that he would send information to the usher teams, but often he would not receive a response from them. Marty suggested perhaps the information needs to be presented before each usher team's assignment month rather than one annual meeting. Pastor George commented

that we need to be mindful of the time it takes to pass the plate is “downtime” for anyone viewing the service via electronic means. Another comment from him was if you attend a synagogue or a megachurch, there is no offering. People are made aware of a box located in the church as they’re leaving. It is his experience that people are “going to give what they’re going to give”. They know in advance and have their cash or check ready to contribute. We may not be benefiting ourselves by passing the offering plate because “that’s what we’ve always done”. And adding the passing of the plate may not change anything. We may want to do some investigation first to see if it adds to the worship service or detracts. How does it effect the online worship viewers? Does it increase giving or does it remain the same? What he’s noticed is right now our service is so streamlined. However, if we need to add an acolyte for the candles or an usher to collect the offerings, we may be scrambling to find more volunteers. And he can see how hard we are all working as it is. And he can also see how things are flowing so smoothly. Pastor George suggested looking in on the larger churches that do not collect an offering during worship. Ask them why and ask them what they do instead just for a different perspective.

Marty commented that he enjoys seeing the kids helping with the scripture during church. Wouldn’t it be great to get the kids involved as acolytes? Pastor George feels that would be great. Especially if we want them to feel like they’re a part of something and stay active in the church. Giving them responsibility is a good way to do that.

One thing he’s shared with Michele is a Seventh-Day Adventist service he attended. They took two offerings. The second was for the benefit of their children’s program. We know that people will give joyfully to children. And we also know that most people under 50 do not arrive with cash. But give them a Q.R. Code and they’ll be more likely to give. Marty reiterated these are all things that should be discussed and investigated by a Worship & Music Committee.

Marsha offered that wouldn’t it be nice to have some type of offering receptacle within each pew for people to use. Wanda offered that she has noticed some of the ushers only come to church when it is their turn to usher.

Pastor George then reiterated that if the passing of the offering plate does not make a difference in the overall collection dollars, is it necessary to do so? If not doing it keeps the service streamlined and easier to find ushers, should we add it back in when things are moving smoothly now? And that’s not to say we’re giving up on it, we’re merely pausing to think about it. Pastor George asked for the opinions of the people that are on Zoom.

Joy offered that the bulletin advises offering plates are in the back of the church. But depending upon what aisle you choose to leave the church from, you may not have it readily accessible to you. She also noticed that during the HS Mission Trip service, a visitor was sitting in front of her. She had a check ready to give but she didn’t see an opportunity to do so because the youth picked up all four plates from the back to walk to the Chancel. Thus leaving the space in the back empty. Phil commented similarly. He feels there should be multiple plates in multiple locations for people to take advantage of. And he feels the effort should be intensified to push electronic giving. Marty and Wanda agreed. “It’s so easy”. Bill Biedenstein shared this conversation is the larger sense of “How we make the ask? It’s important to keep the “ask” in front of people. Ken Hamilton commented that we need to make people aware of how they can contribute from their retirement accounts, IRAs, etc.

Marty shared that after the last Council Conversation, Bo & Janet Frumson approached their financial advisor to ask how they could contribute to the church via their retirement accounts. During that conversation, their advisor told them he had given presentations to churches on this topic. If acceptable, Marty will contact their advisor to find out if that person would be available to come to St. Lucas to do the same. It’s an untapped potential. All agreed that’s a good idea.

Marty asked if there was any other New Business to discuss. Katy offered information as the Cemetery Board Liaison. Joan & Kirk Dalgaard have formed a Tree Planting Task Force to replace many of the trees that were taken down in recent years due to disease. However, Katy asked why couldn’t this task force be implemented on the entire church campus instead of just the cemetery. There are older trees between our building and Denny Road

that could be costly to remove due to the power lines in that vicinity. Phil stated that we could include that in our Welcome Center flooring and new dishwasher campaign. Marty also knows Donovan has been talking for years about cleaning out the invasive Japanese Honeysuckle growth on campus.

This discussion brings up a point Marty has wondered why we don't have a building committee and a grounds committee. Combined as it is now is a lot of work for only one group. Kirk was unmuted to share his task force information. Kirk knows there is a budget line item for tree removal. Therefore, he thought why couldn't there be a budget line item for new trees? This met some opposition, thereby resulting in a task force for tree-replanting in the cemetery. This task force has drafted a proposal for the Cemetery Board's consideration. The group has consulted with an arborist to advise the best trees to plant in a cemetery. Those that will have a root system which goes straight down as opposed to spreading out like a web. Presently they've secured enough donations and the approval of the Cemetery Board to plant two new trees in the cemetery. However, still under discussion is that the board has asked for the task force to secure more funds for the ongoing maintenance of those new trees into the future.

Marty asked what the term perpetual care means. Isn't that forever? Then shouldn't the Cemetery Board be providing that type of infinite care to any trees in the cemetery? This is a unique proposition as it's never come up before. Katy stated many St. Lucas families have a stake in the cemetery due to their family members being buried there. Plus living as close to the cemetery as she does, she's able to see the non-cemetery activity that takes place over the course of a week. Walkers, dog-walkers, etc. It would seem only natural to use this tree-planting task force for the church grounds as well. This task force, in consultation with their arborist, has discussed the best type of various trees for replanting. Marsha shared this group has been working on this project for three years. Yet sadly they've had opposition from the Cemetery Board. Kirk has a proposal that he's willing to share. He will submit it to the Council for their consideration

Without any further New Business to discuss, the Zoom guests were released from the meeting and the Council moved into an Executive Session.

*This now ended the Public Session of the August 26, 2024 Council meeting.

(Minute marker: 1 hour/45 minutes)

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Smith,
Recording Secretary

NOTE - the next regular Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 28 at 6:00 p.m.