

SAINT LUCAS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
May 20, 2024, 6:00 pm - Zoom Hybrid/Room 19

(This meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by President, Marty Schmidt and was opened to visitors.)

MEMBERS PRESENT: Phil Denton, Marsha Fey, Katy Forand, Wanda Gillman, Kathy Herron, Donovan Larson, Marty Schmidt, and Barbara Smith, plus Rev. Merrimon Boyd/ex-officio via Zoom
|| Nine members. *(Absent - Violet Brooks)*

VISITORS PRESENT: Bill Brinkhorst & Joy Dressel/Zoom, Sandy Harris/Zoom, Dan Herron/Room 19, Laurie Ising/Zoom, Ellen Littleton/Zoom || Six visitors.

OPENING PRAYER: The meeting was opened with a prayer by Marty Schmidt.

GUEST COMMENTS: None

CONSENT AGENDA:

- A/V Ministry - April 23, 2024, Minutes
- Council Meeting - April 22, 2024, Minutes
- Council Meeting | Executive Session - April 22, 2024, Minutes
- Finance Ministry - April 16, 2024, Minutes
- ONA Task Force - April 16, 2024, Minutes
 - (5) *REPORTS*

Wanda moved to accept and Barbara seconded that the May 20, 2024 Consent Agenda be received as submitted. The motion was approved unanimously.

STAFF REPORTS:

Pastor Janet - New employee - no report this month

Pastor Merrimon - He was on vacation - no report this month.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

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

- The regular offering for April was \$39,446.58. This offering amount is under budget for the month by \$15,970.09.
- The total expenses for April were \$84,611.93. This expense amount is under budget by \$15,869.28. There isn't a deficit this month.
- The income for this month was \$5,923.53 over expenses. The total income increase was due to the Endowment distribution of \$43,399.92.
 - The GEN Endowment amount was \$17,915.36. The PET Endowment amount was \$19,526.22. The Beyersdorfer Endowment amount was \$5,555.34.
- The extra spending amounts this month are due to:
 - HVAC \$3562.00, IFS Bi-annual Payment of \$3,165.50, and American Water Treatment/water purification of \$396.50. The rest was all typical maintenance charges.
- *The deficit YTD is (\$45,151.09).*

Marsha asked about electronic giving, is that lumped in with the general offering? Wanda replied that Jeff categorizes that. Marty feels yes, that is the case. He will ask Jeff at the Financial Committee meeting tomorrow.

Marty shared some thoughts with the Council tonight. He's been giving a lot of thought to how we should develop the budget moving forward. He has shared his idea with a few people. Tonight he wants to present it to us for our opinion. His first thought falls on the physical building of our church and the expenses we incur above and beyond utilities, i.e. maintenance, such as a new roof on the preschool. The 2024 budget for Physical Facilities Ministries is approximately \$110K. This is about the same amount of money the P.E.T. distributes each year. The original intent of P.E.T. over 35 years ago was to set up a reserve in the event of a catastrophic loss to the building. However, currently, we have an insurance policy in place for \$10M. With the size and status of our current congregation, it's unlikely we'd need to use that full amount to rebuild a new facility. Since the original intent of the P.E.T. was tied to the coverage of the building, why don't we begin to think about tying our budget for the Physical Facilities Ministries to the annual disbursement amount from P.E.T.? We don't need to state that in the Bylaws. But we could draft a policy to follow that premise. We could do the same with the Beyersdoerfer Fund, as that fund was specifically intended to be used for the Children's Education in the church. It could even be tied to the hiring of a future Director of Christian Education or a second minister who would oversee the Christian Education component in the future. Then we could go to the congregation to state that we have our Offerings and the General Endowment fund reserved for everything else associated with the life of the church. We need to stop borrowing money to pay for other things that were not intended to be used for those "other" categories. *"Thoughts?"*

Donovan stated an example of a future -unexpected- facility expense. How would this new scenario affect a situation like that?

Marty feels it would get us away from the 5% rule in the Constitution/Bylaws. If there is money in that facility account that would cover an unexpected expense, we could use it since it would be earmarked -by policy- for Facilities. If the money isn't there, then we need to have a conversation about where we're going to get the money to pay for an unexpected/expensive repair. It would keep us aware. Marty does not want the church to go broke because of this building. It will force us to make this building as economical as possible while also keeping it separate from our Missions and Payroll that should be coming from our offerings.

Barbara asked if we can expect the P.E.T. disbursement to equal \$100K/year. Marty replied it depends on whether the P.E.T. board chooses to update the trust as requested by the congregation. The P.E.T. board will be reporting on their work this year at the Semi-Annual meeting. Marty also shared that the P.E.T. board has potentially three paths forward. Yet the last he heard, they are *"leaning toward decanting"* the trust and revising it with up-to-date investment strategies.

Marty is not asking for a decision today. It is something that will need to be decided on at the Annual meeting. He just wants us to be aware of his thoughts. His President's Letter in the Semi-Annual packet will be explicit with the facts about offerings and our budget. We can not keep running a deficit.

A brief discussion continued within the group about giving, missions, and possible future budget cuts. We need to determine our priorities such as a Pastor, building, etc. There are no excuses anymore. We now know we have about 250 active people in the life of this church. By having these discussions now, it takes some of the pressure off of our incoming new Pastor. If he brings in growth with new people or returning people, it will be better for the health of the church. In addition, we need to consolidate our giving into more selective charities. Perhaps we need to focus our giving on the South County/Lindbergh District immediate area that surrounds St. Lucas UCC. These are all things we need to consider as we move forward.

Physical Facilities Ministries:

In addition to the recent meeting minutes submitted, Donovan shared the following information with the Council:

- The roof work is now complete. The flashing looks great above the main entrance and the chimney. Plus, the flat roof above the office was finished as well. That's the good news.
 - The bad news is the roof above the Preschool will be more than the original \$1,500 quote. This may be due to the April 18th storm. Marty asked if we're checking with our insurance regarding a weather-related claim. Donovan will follow up with Jeff on that question. Marty feels we need to make an insurance claim and have them assess the damage. Had Glandt not placed the temporary sheeting up there, we would have had more damage than is present. Donovan is attempting to defend Glandt as the right choice for this work. Their bid is \$21K-\$26K depending on what they find once they start removing the old work. But Donovan wants to get them out and not delay this work any further. Marty agreed and feels we need to approve Glandt's bid to replace the roof above the preschool for the estimated bid amount of up to \$27K while also having an insurance adjuster assess the damage.
- The company that is sealing the parking lot has finished the cemetery roads. They will begin sealing the NE lot this week. That lot will be divided in half, by N & S and completed as such. As an FYI - Dan Herron sent a pic to Donovan with water running under the portion of the lot nearest to the retention pond. Due to the high water table there and the rain this season, it is just a fact that this portion of the lot will always be a problem. On a positive note, that area of the parking lot experiences less use with our lower membership numbers.
- Lindbergh Schools has finally paid their rental fees and has submitted their insurance documents as required. Phil asked if that was due to the superintendent's involvement. Donovan replied, "No he referred it to the CFO, Joël Scheible and she handled it for us."
- Concerning the bell tower, McShane Bell, Co. will add a tolling hammer on the second bell after needed maintenance such as greasing, and replacing bolts. Their bid for that work is \$3,800. The group's consensus was to avoid incurring this expense. As long as our current setup is not unsafe, we need to reserve our finances for more pressing items. Additional discussion continued about another bell stored in the garage shed.
- The Sanctuary carpet will be fully cleaned this Wednesday/the 27th.
- The parsonage lease has been renewed. Also, Donovan and Adam replaced a screen door in the parsonage.
- Finally, the dishwasher in the church kitchen is not working to its fullest capacity. It's either a worn-out pump or possibly built-up lime deposits in the interior piping. This is still a work in progress.

After this report, Marty added, he would like to have the Finance Committee research whether our revenue covers our costs on these two rental homes. Donovan advised it probably does because "we hardly do anything to the two properties". But we also don't get a lot of rent from the parsonage either. Marty feels strongly those two properties need to cover their own costs. Otherwise, we need to seriously think about the viability of keeping those properties. Donovan added that maintenance of the parsonage has been out-of-pocket with private donations to help with recent repairs. Plus the rental amount on the Sexton's house allows that building to be well in the black.

Kathy asked for clarification on the dishwasher discussion. A dishwasher in one of the houses? No, the dishwasher in the church kitchen. Marsha took the opportunity to advise that the church kitchen no longer has a microwave either. Debbie & Charlie decided to pitch it as it was not working. The group felt that was a bit extreme, as it should have been donated to an electronic recycling group rather than go to the landfill.

OLD BUSINESS:

>General Offering Stats - The discussion above after the finance report plus additional discussion that will take place during the semi-annual meeting will offer the necessary consideration needed about this topic.

> Land Use Task Force - Still tabled until further notice. Donovan suggested having listening sessions with the congregation so they are aware there could be more potential from those back ten acres, rather than just ball field rental. Perhaps having those sessions before the annual meeting so the congregation can think about that topic in advance. All agreed to this suggestion. Kathy offered that we've talked about this before. However, there have been more pressing items on the Council's plate. Marty advised we will have the opportunity to re-engage with some of these other topics in the upcoming months.

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

> Other Old Business - Marsha took the opportunity to discuss the voting process used during our recent candidating weekend. She feels the following information needs to be on record for another such future event. She feels strongly there should only be ONE list of members to verify the voters, rather than the "cattle-call" method used Sunday. That was too chaotic. We should have released the congregation in sections to come back and verify their attendance. For example, all those with last names that start with A-D, come back and get checked in. Once completed, then call all those with last names starting with E-H, to come back and check in, etc. Also having a designated flow of traffic coming and going from the pews would be highly recommended. Allowing everyone to come back at the same time looking for their designated table with their last name was too confusing for all. Kathy mentioned she witnessed non-Council members checking in congregation members from the master list on Sunday morning. This is something to be aware of in the event we need to use this process again. The group agreed it shouldn't be an issue at the Semi-annual or Annual meetings as a sign-in sheet is used to verify the current membership.

NEW BUSINESS:

> Council Nominating Team for a November Vote - A Council nominating team for November needs to be developed. The new Constitution/Bylaws state that it should be a committee of at least three to five members. At least one from the church Council and at least two or more from the congregation. Marty asked who is going off Council? Violet, Marsha, Kathy, and Donovan. One of you should be in charge of the nominating committee if you have no plans of running again. Kathy volunteered for this post. Marty thanked her and charged her with recruiting her nominating team. Marsha offered her help. Marty will create a list of the anticipated vacancies of all the committees for their use.

> Semi-Annual Meeting - Wanda will be giving a presentation on the state of the finances for the church. The Preschool will give a presentation as their new fiscal year begins on 7/1/24. The P.E.T. will be giving a report as well as the Cemetery Board. Marty will share his President's letter in the booklet, which he may expound upon during the meeting.

> Council Meeting Minutes and Reports - Barbara reported on the checklist that Denee has created and shared with us to track the Council reports and the Council minutes. Barbara advised some items still need to be updated on the website concerning the Council's information. She is offering, with the permission of the Council, to sit with Denee and observe how she works and what needs to be updated. The intent of this is to streamline the information between the Public side vs. the Council side. For example, the approved minutes for Jan/Feb/March were not posted until recently when Denee was reminded to do so. Donovan would like to see it be more intuitive.

> Other New Business - Disbursement of the General Endowment and the P.E.T. were discussed. The General Endowment installments occur in March & September, two times. The P.E.T. installments occur in each quarter, four times. However, the General Endowment has been typically paid out in April & October to coincide with the P.E.T. payments. How long ago that changed is unknown. But according to that document, it should occur in March & September. Marty shared we are allowed to change those dates within the document. Seeing that January and February are typically lean months, wouldn't it be better to pick one of those two and have the second

installment follow up six months later? The P.E.T. will remain quarterly. Jason, the General Endowment administrator advised we can change the disbursement dates to whatever is best for us. It is done by a policy change which Marty will have available at the next meeting.

Marty asked if there was any other New Business to discuss.

Barbara shared that The ONA Task Force is still working through their listening sessions with congregation members. Specifically, she asked if anyone on the Council has not yet been contacted to discuss this topic. Marsha, Katy, and Phil have not yet had that opportunity. Phil took this moment to ask what the discussion would be. He understood from others that many people have already left the church because Pastor Vicki elected to perform a gay marriage. Barbara corrected him by stating that she has not performed a gay wedding. What occurred was she was asked early on in her tenure, "If asked to perform a gay wedding would she do it?" Her answer was "yes". Phil did not hear it that way. Barbara reiterated that is what Pastor Vicki expressed to the ONA Task Force during one of their earlier meetings. Kathy agreed and added the Council stood behind and supported Pastor Vicki when that question arose. Phil also expressed his concern about having data on file to show support for gaining new members or risking the loss of members if St. Lucas elects to become ONA. Barbara added that some new members assume that because we are UCC we have already passed ONA at St. Lucas and are disappointed to learn that we have not yet passed it, i.e. a two-way street. Marty quoted an article regarding ONA in UCC churches and followed up by sending the article to the group. Katy also referenced a web article that Pastor Vicki shared with the Council last year with information about ONA. Barbara advised she would secure information about ONA from Barb Biedenstein with Gateway Open & Affirming Coalition for Phil.

Barbara also reminded the group that there are sign-ups on the Council page for monthly communion, the monthly meeting prayer, and the weekly offering collections. Her reminder comes soon after Pentecost when many were left unaware there should have been preparations made in advance for communion that weekend.

Without any further discussion, Marty asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Wanda made the motion and Kathy seconded it. The motion was accepted unanimously by a show of hands and the meeting was adjourned.

In closing, *The Lord's Prayer* was recited.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Smith,
Recording Secretary

(Minute marker: 1 hour/37 minutes)

NOTE - the next regular Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 24th at 6:00 p.m.