

SAINT LUCAS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 27, 2023, 6:00 pm - Zoom Hybrid/Room 19

*(*This meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm by President, Marty Schmidt.)*

MEMBERS PRESENT: Phil Denton, Marsha Fey/Zoom, Katy Forand, Kathy Herron, Donovan Larson, Jack Laudenschlager, Marty Schmidt, Paul Simons, Barbara Smith, and Juanita Wagner/Zoom | ten members.

STAFF PRESENT: Rev. Dr. Carole Barner, and Rev. Vicki Hampton

VISITORS PRESENT: Ken Hamilton/Zoom and Dan Herron

OPENING PRAYER:

The meeting was opened with a prayer said by Marty Schmidt

GUEST COMMENTS:

None offered.

REVIEW OF JANUARY MINUTES:

Paul moved and Kathy seconded the January 2023 Council meeting minutes for approval. The motion was accepted unanimously by a show of hands.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- A.V. Meeting - February 1, 2023, Minutes
- Caring Ministries Meeting - February 13, 2023, Minutes
- Membership & Evangelism Meeting - January 3, 2023, Minutes

Comment - As Preschool Board Liaison, Juanita Wagner reported the Preschool is doing “*fantastically well*”, pre-registrations for the new school year are well underway and are almost at full capacity. Those who took advantage of early registration were offered a \$50 credit toward their account. (Juanita’s liaison notes were not received in time for release prior to this meeting.) Marty took the opportunity to remind members that if you’re a liaison to a board/committee it is not your responsibility to submit the meeting minutes to the Council. The recording secretary of that board/committee is responsible for the task.

After the discussion concluded, Jack moved and Barbara seconded the February 2023 Consent Agenda as submitted for approval. The motion was accepted unanimously by a show of hands.

STAFF REPORTS:

Pastor Vicki -

- Pastor Vicki advised she will take vacation time from August 27 - September 17, 2023, to visit Barcelona, Paris, and Amsterdam. She will return to the office on September 18, 2023.
- Pastor Vicki’s proposal for Holy Week is:
 - Eliminate Maundy Thursday evening service
 - Add a second service to Good Friday - i.e. afternoon and evening
 - No Saturday service
 - However, two services will be planned for Easter Sunday - likely 9 am & 11 am

There were no questions or comments about Pastor Vicki’s report.

Pastor Carole -

- Pastor Carole will be out of the office the week of March 13th and the following week for a family wedding.

Comment - Marty complimented Pastor Carole, as he is “*excited about how involved the youth are*”.

There were no questions or comments about Pastor Carole’s report.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Paul Simons updated the Council on the current financial status of the church. He reported the process of creating the financial reports is getting “*much smoother with fewer hiccups*”.

January was a good month, giving was up both over budget and over last year’s giving. January 2023 had five Sundays, and 2022 had four Sundays. However, if you extrapolate January 2022 giving over five Sundays, we are still \$7K over January 2022 giving. Expenses in 2023 were in line with the January 2022 expenses. Overall the deficit for the month was less than what was projected and less than in 2022. So we are starting out 2023 on a good note.

In addition, Donovan complimented Pastor Vicki on her recent Stewardship videos. He also complimented Pastor Carole on the success of the Pancake Dinner. Pastor Carole took the opportunity to give a brief summary of when/how the youth meet.

>Building Fund Update -

- In 16/17, Council/Stewardship decided the direction of the church should be more missional.
- Back then it was decided to remove the Building Fund option from the offering envelopes.
- After which the intent was to temporarily hold those funds in reserve for use if/when needed. (An example would be the 2/16/23 lightning strike.)
- However, after that determination, the monies were never moved to the General Fund.
- Tonight the Council reaffirmed the former Council's decision to transfer those monies -approximately \$9k- into the General Fund.
- After the Building Fund discussion concluded, Donovan moved and Paul seconded the current amount in the Building Fund line item be transferred to the General Fund. The motion was accepted unanimously by a show of hands.

>Employee Retention Credit Update - Marty advised once Provisum takes their 15% service fee, St. Lucas should be receiving approximately \$320K, with a portion of those monies going to St. Lucas Preschool.

Juanita asked why we chose an outside group to do our filing for this work. Vicki explained the paperwork for the task was unbelievable compared to the paperwork needed for the previous Payroll Protection Plan. The E.R.C. paperwork was “*way beyond too complicated*” plus the documentation needed for this filing was to be submitted in a very specific fashion. It was “*beyond something we could do on our own*”.

>Payroll Administrator Update - Marty had hoped to tell us that everything was going great with St. Lucas's paychecks. However, very recently things fell apart. Because this vendor has already been given second chances to improve their service, St. Lucas is now seeking bids from other vendors. Once all bids are received, a quick Zoom Council meeting may be needed to approve them.

>P.E.T. Transfers - There were two transfers that had yet to be transferred into the General Funds. Due to serious health issues on the part of Noel Knobloch, those transfers were not made. After researching how this needed to be done without Noel’s assistance, the P.E.T. transfer was successfully performed today and that money is now in the General Fund. Marty did speak with Dan Wenk also on P.E.T. Dan has been communicating with Noel. Dan advised Marty that Noel intends to complete his term on P.E.T.

OLD BUSINESS:

>Physical Facilities Ministries (formerly known as Building & Grounds) - Donovan will be chairing this new committee. Since Violet is in charge of the ball fields, Marty would like to see her participate on this team. Donovan will contact her. There are several people Donovan has spoken with to add to the team. He feels someone with some technical knowledge and spare time would be best for this committee.

Documents and property held by the former committee have been requested to be returned to St. Lucas, although no response has been received. Wendy is experiencing poor health so Marty was only able to leave him a voicemail in response to Wendy's voicemail to him. Marty thanked him for his years of service and offered that if Wendy chooses, he is welcome to continue working on the new committee.

>Extent of 2/16/23 Lightning Strike - Dan Herron provided an update on the condition of the A.V. equipment damaged by the 2/16/23 lightning strike. An initial estimate to replace the damaged equipment came to \$22,265. Dan supplied the Council with a spreadsheet with details. Dan has met a rep with Tech Electronics who inspected our equipment. The rep will send a letter to Dan for our insurance carrier stating their assessment of the damage he found. Dan reminded the Council there has been past discussion about upgrading the current equipment. In light of what has happened, now would be the time to begin that work. So the question remains how much money will be needed once our insurance carrier pays this claim? In addition to the figures presented tonight, amounts for installation and supplemental parts were not included in the spreadsheet monies shared with the Council.

Vicki will check with Jeff to determine if the insurance policy will allow replacement value. The Council agreed the sooner we begin receiving bids on new/upgraded equipment the better.

Phil asked the question of what protection was in place prior to the lightning strike. He feels the first order of business before equipment is purchased/installed, is to make sure we have the necessary safeguards in place to prevent this from happening again in the future.

Marty asked if Reinhold Electric is able to provide St. Lucas with an opinion of what will be needed before installation work begins. Donovan replied that in the past Ampron, Skip Saloman's company would've been the group to perform this type of job. However, Donovan is taking advantage of the current situation to branch out and try someone new due to the extent of work needed with this future project. He has contacted Reinhold Electric who's coming out Wednesday to review and give their opinion.

Donovan feels this is an opportunity for us to stop putting "*all our eggs in one basket*". He contacted Karl Scheidt, a former church member who's in charge of the facilities for University City Schools, and they use Reinhold as their go-to electrical provider. There are 14 panels in the church in addition to the main breaker. All are of various ages/conditions. Asking an electrician to "*walk in the door and read everything is going to be a pretty tall order*". We have a very complicated building. It will be quite some time before we have a handle on this. But it will be the beginning of the process to get us back up to speed on what is needed. We'll know more by the end of the week.

Phil pointed out it's important we take this opportunity to do upgrades like surge protection for all areas. There will obviously be much more money spent over what the insurance company pays out.

Also, since the strike Charlie has advised Donovan the HVAC is not working in the undercroft area of the church. So a review and diagnosis of the total HVAC system will also be required in the future.

Marty advised Jeff has spoken with the insurance company about leaving this claim open for an extended period of time considering that not only the electric and A.V. equipment are impacted by this event, but the organ as well. Seth is aware of one panel which is not working and had someone come out to inspect the organ. That technician advised Seth that once lightning is involved you may have no idea what's been touched until a full inspection is complete. It's been over 20 years since the electrical panels in the organ were inspected. It's very likely the chips used in that electrical system may no longer be available. And like the A.V. tech, this rep has volunteered to do a total review of the organs' electrical system and draft a letter for our insurance carrier about what damage has occurred and what will be needed for repair. Also like the other electrical components in the church, now would be the time to upgrade what may be needed for the organ.

And finally, when the Spectrum technician came out to reconnect the internet, he advised there were two places burnt, at the grounding and the pole. (Comment - Donovan shared that Bob Beck agreed with that assessment of the surge coming into the building from a pole on the street, as he could see frayed wiring and insulation on an exterior pole.)

The Spectrum technician also advised he did not see any indication there was a lightning rod on the church. (Comment - Paul knows there was one in the past on the steeple.) Could it have been removed and not replaced when the new roof was installed? Unknown. Katie advised her family experienced a jolt that night. They actually thought their house was hit due to the extreme noise and vibration within their own home.

>Parsonage Work Update - The main sewer line that drains from the hall bathroom and the kitchen has been replaced. That is the line that went through the crawl space in the north half of the building. \$8K has been paid to one company to dry out that area. Bieg Plumbing came in behind them to do the line repair work. They also did some additional repair work on the stack that drains to the two bathrooms. Donovan has also learned more about where repeat blockages have occurred in the house. Apparently, it's the stack that comes in from the ground in that area of the structure. They may be able to use a new process -HydroFlush- which will knock out roots/sediments that have collected and built up over time in the drain walls. This process will hopefully allow the drain to flow easier with fewer future blockages occurring.

>Sidewalk Work Update - The job was completed for \$2325 and that issue was resolved. Evidence of the work is barely noticeable.

>Access Changes - All exterior locks have been rekeyed. Some of the doors needed to have the cylinders replaced because of the type of lock involved. Others only needed to have the keys replaced. The result is that all the exterior doors now use the same key, *"which makes Charlie's life incredibly easier, and he even has access to exterior doors he never had to keys to before"*.

>Neighbor's Fence on Church Property - The property owner has changed their mind upon signing any document St. Lucas would produce regarding their fence sitting over our property line. Comment - Marty shared if you look at the area in question, you'll be able to see it's a small plot that St. Lucas will most likely never develop or have use for. Which allowed Marty to summarize the following options to resolve this issue:

1. We can press the issue, and get a lawyer, which will cost us money.
2. We can sell that piece of land for a nominal price which then becomes the homeowner's liability and no longer St. Lucas'.
3. Or we can cede it to them

We can do any of these, yet Marty would like to get this matter resolved soon. To cede it would be the easiest solution.

Phil offered his opinion. He would not cede this approximate 3200 sq ft to them. He would demand they remove their fence. The property belongs to the church. It's our property and he feels they need to respect that. We need to put them on notice that we're disputing their fence on our property. We don't want an adverse possession issue to arise.

Paul's opinion is the perception involved. If it's an unusual bit of property we're never going to use, why antagonize the neighbors over it, why make a big deal of it? *"Look at what that Christian church is doing. They're playing hardball with us about a property they're never going to use."* It doesn't make St. Lucas look good.

Phil feels St. Lucas is in the right and we should protect our property. Even though we may never use it, he recognizes the fact that it offers a buffer from their yard to our property.

Donovan remembers -per Karl G.- there was an agreement written and signed by the previous homeowner. Yet he had never heard any mention of transferring that agreement to the new homeowner. Does this new family have that document in their possession? Pastor Vicki answered no.

Additional discussion of this issue resulted in a Council decision that Marty and Jeff will attempt to meet with the family to discuss the issue further. If that meeting does not go well, Marty will be prepared with an offer to sell the plot to the family for its current market value. Depending upon how that meeting ends will inform Marty and Jeff of what is needed to resolve the issue. No motion will be offered until additional information is gathered.

> Alcohol Policy for the Trivia Night - This topic will be revisited once that event is concluded on 3/11/23. Marty volunteered that he likes this compromise for this event, allowing alcohol without St. Lucas offering or selling it that night. We're putting the responsibility on the attendees.

> Bylaws Task Force Update - This meeting will take place on March 2. More details will follow after that time.

> Venmo Update - We now have Venmo. Information about its availability is in the pews and the office.

> Open Council Position - This should be a nominating committee decision. But the nominating committee only addresses nominations at a congregational meeting. Therefore, per Paul in a situation such as this, the bylaws allow the president to appoint someone to fill the vacancy as an interim member. That person would then be put up for nomination and voted on at the next congregational meeting - i.e. May 2023. Marty has several people in mind and he will approach them to gather their thoughts. His goal is to have an interim in place by the March Council meeting.

Pastor Carole asked about the installation of this new person. According to Paul if you are appointed, that is your installment. Whereas Pastor Carole views the installation as including an agreement to do the work of God. Even though this type of situation does not occur often, Marty agreed it's not a bad idea to have that person installed in front of the congregation, just as the other new members did in January. Pastor Carole also noted it is a very transparent move for the congregation to witness. Marty added that it could be performed on the Sunday following the person's agreement and their first meeting attendance with the Council.

> Other Old Business - Phil gave an update to advise that our ball field concession sales are not subject to taxes by the State of Missouri as long as we complete the required form and certificate from the state.

NEW BUSINESS:

> BABY BOWERS - Pastor Vicki announced that Denee had her baby this morning at 3:43 am. Jordan Rae Bowers joins her Mom, Dad, and big sister Riley in this happy little family. They are expecting to be released on 2/28/23.

> CEMETERY FEES - The cemetery is asking permission to increase its fees. For plots, it would mean a 5% increase. They're attributing the increase to labor costs. Our fee for digging a spot for cremains is less money as we don't hire out that service. Donovan called other local cemeteries to see if our fees are in line with others in the area. Donovan reported that currently, it appears St. Paul's Cemetery has the least expensive fees for burial. Barbara made the motion to approve the 5% fee increase. Paul seconded the motion. The motion was accepted unanimously by a show of hands.

> AUTONOMY OF CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR - Marty feels Jeff should have the authority to approve reasonable purchases/projects so every monetary decision does not need to go to the Council for approval. Not to mention the new Physical Facilities Ministry would appreciate having that freedom as well. The prior threshold amount was \$3K. However, that was established back in 2000. If you take into account inflation, that figure today would be over \$5K. This policy is primarily used for emergencies. Maintenance-type issues would not require bids as long as the work is below the threshold amount and within the budget of any given committee. A list of vetted, approved vendors is on file when needed. However, if a lengthy -brand-new- project comes up bids would be still required. \$6K rather than \$5K was discussed. (*Note - this revised policy does not prevent anyone from either getting bids or prior approval of the Council at any time if a committee feels compelled to explore estimated expenses at length.*) Kathy moved the new threshold to be increased to \$6K. Barbara seconded her motion. The motion was accepted unanimously by a show of hands.

> AUTONOMY OF MINISTRIES - As a continuation of the previous topic, committees, and boards also have their own autonomy to make decisions that are within their own annual budget amount. Due to the current church deficit -speculation- Marty has received many phone calls from committees/boards questioning what they are/aren't allowed to spend money for. Katy suggested we can remind committees/boards of the prior arrangement. Jack also asked how

one committee knows what another committee is doing so duplication does not occur. The answer to that is the Council liaison and/or meeting minutes submitted to the Council should keep that from happening.

>OFFICE SPACE REQUEST - An Episcopalian minister -clergy colleague- has approached Pastor Carole looking for office space in the Lindbergh/Sappington area for use by an organization named MO Jobs for Justice. They were wondering if St. Lucas could help them. A vibrant, lengthy discussion took place with questions such as what type of group they are, how long they'll need a room, where would we put them, what hours would they be in the building, whether they'll have access to the preschool children, etc., etc., etc.

The bylaws advise the Council is responsible for approving outside use of the building. However, the end result of this discussion is the group decided to not allow this organization to have access to our space. Yet, the Council was glad to have this question come up as it opened the door of discussion to what we are prepared to agree to in the future. Do we want to try and increase revenue in this manner? Or if agreed to should it be a goodwill allowance?

Additional discussion resulted as Pastor Vicki is concerned with the fact (1) we don't have an evening custodian to lock down the building after outside use and (2) we need a way to lock down the preschool from outside access if we are going to consider allowing daytime use of the building. Currently, the pat answer given by Debbie when these calls come in is "No" we do not allow outside groups to use the building. However, scouts, A.A., and exercise groups have used our building in the past. Perhaps a case-by-case review of these inquiries needs to be completed before flatly saying no.

>SEARCH COMMITTEE REQUEST - Bill Biedenstein, chair of the search committee, submitted a question for the Council to consider. Does the Council have a plan in place for our vision moving forward? The committee is wanting clarification to name clearly who St. Lucas is now.

Pastor Vicki suggested the search committee say we are a church in transition. We are not the St. Lucas church we were six years ago. Paul suggested we concentrate on the aspect that we are a more missional church than we were then. Another comment given is that we've been a "country club" church in the past, which is no longer the case now. We are transitioning into a more missional perspective whereby taking into account and participating in the life of the community.

Pastor Carole advised the pastors reviewing our church profile will look to see how many people of a certain age are here, what programs do we offer, where do we give our money and where do we spend our time. Which may prompt them to think of additional questions to ask St. Lucas. Per Pastor Vicki, "if you know exactly what your vision is then I don't believe you're going to get a 'visionary' pastor". Then Paul asked (our vision) is going to change, right? "It shouldn't be static." Pastor Vicki agreed and expressed that during the past few years, most churches have been attempting to survive.

Pastor Vicki reminded the group we've also started transitioning from a traditional church into a tech-savvy church by reaching out to the community. Basically as a result of CoVid. After more discussion of this topic, Marty suggested he will collect and condense our thoughts... i.e. impact of CoVid, currently in transition, etc.

Kathy asked if the committee may be concerned with a 70/30 split. Pastor Vicki stated you can refer to that as "a vast majority and also a significant minority". One goal of the interim ministers has been to help the congregation who are interested to be able to respond to the naysayers in a cogent, decisive way. That means giving you the theological tools to respond, helping you give each other permission to respond, and permission to give each other the benefit of the doubt, i.e. to help you figure out ways for you to deal with those situations. Marty and Pastor Vicki agreed to underscore the teachings of our interim ministers as a way for St. Lucas to become a more covenantal church, within our church, within the community, and within the UCC.

Marty will draft a response for them with the comments discussed tonight. He'll present it to the Council and the pastors for review before releasing it to the Search Committee. The final copy will eventually be posted in the Council Corner of a future e-Blast for the congregation's benefit.

>MAY MEETING DATES - FYI, there will be a Council Conversation this Sunday after church at 10:45. Kathy asked if it would be a hybrid. Marty hadn't thought along those lines. But yes, most certainly it can be a hybrid here in Room 19.

Regarding the Semi-Annual Congregational meeting date, Marty will be out of town for the first 10 days of May. The second Sunday -the 14th- is Mother's Day. The third Sunday, May 21, is Confirmation Sunday for our nine students. The church bylaws state our semi-annual meeting is to meet in May. After a brief discussion of who will and won't be in town each May weekend, May 28th was the agreed-upon date for the semi-annual meeting at 10:45 am.

Marsha asked for guidance on this year's Easter Egg Hunt. Who can she rely on for staff assistance *and* is April 1st a good date to proceed with her plans? Also, will we still be able to count on Southview School on Eddie & Park? Per Carole, yes - Barb Beck is our contact as she has a connection to the school. Barbara mentioned we need to keep in mind that Barb Beck goes in for a total knee replacement tomorrow. And if Southview School follows the Lindbergh Schools calendar, their kids will be out of the building the entire week of 3/20/23 for Spring Break. A cut-off date for donations will need to be established. Also, a plan for the e-blast postings needs to be coordinated with Debbie since Denee is on maternity leave. Marsha advised the Council that a light breakfast will take place in the Social Hall with the hunt taking place afterward outside unless the weather does not cooperate. In that event, all activities will take place inside. She'll be accepting candy donations to fill the many plastic eggs the church has on hand from last year.

And finally, Marty will be leaving for Kenya on March 10th and will return on March 24th for his peanut butter mission. He will be able to accept texts/emails but be advised there is a nine-hour delay.

>IN CLOSING - Marty asked for a motion to adjourn. Barbara made the motion and Paul seconded it. The motion was accepted unanimously by a show of hands.

The Lord's Prayer was recited.

*(*The length of this meeting was 2 hours | 15 mins.)*

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Smith,
Recording Secretary