

SAINT LUCAS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Minutes of the Church Council Regular Meeting
May 22, 2025

The Church Council convened for the public May Regular Meeting on Thursday, May 22, 2025, in Room 19 and via Zoom. The meeting was called to order at 6:03 P.M. by Barbara Smith, President of the Council.

MEMBERS PRESENT: *Amanda Boyer/Zoom, Melinda Borman, Kirk Dalgaard, Phil Denton, Wanda Gillman, Tracy Mulderig, Marty Schmidt, and Barbara Smith. || Eight members. (Absent – Katy Forand)*

STAFF PRESENT: Rev. George Miller, Senior Minister, and Rev. Janet Pillman, Associate Minister of Pastoral Care and Visitation/Zoom.

VISITORS PRESENT: *Marsha Armentrout/Zoom, Bill Brinkhorst/Zoom, Joan Dalgaard/Zoom, Joy Dressel/Zoom, Ken Fey, Lynn Fey/Zoom, Marsha Fey, Dan Herron/Zoom, Kathy Herron/Zoom, Ellen Littleton/Zoom, Carolyn Schwarz, Kim Witbrodt/Zoom. || Twelve Visitors.*

OPENING PRAYER: Melinda Borman opened the meeting with a prayer.

GUEST COMMENTS: Marsha Fey gave a statement regarding the discussion of Saturday evening services during the semi-annual meeting on May 4th, 2025 (see attached). This statement included the following themes:

1. Ending Saturday service was not discussed during her term on the Council that expired in December. The discussion focused on staffing the service.
2. Compromise was possible when dissent was voiced regarding the new hymnals. A similar path was not pursued for the Saturday evening decision even though this impacted long-time, dedicated members.
3. The decision lacked public discussion and transparency. When this public discussion occurred later at the semi-annual meeting, she felt that some of the comments were hurtful and inaccurate.
4. Disagreeing with the claim that Saturday night was a separate congregation, Marsha listed the ways each member supported St. Lucas UCC.
5. Members demeaned and misrepresented the fellowship of Saturday evening participants.
6. A call to action was made requesting more clarity on the “why” of the decision, better communication of what the Council is considering, and for the Council to model good governance on behalf of all St. Lucas UCC members.

ONE WORD “THANKS”: Each Council member shared one thing for which they felt gratitude.

CONSENT AGENDA:

It was moved by Marty Schmidt and seconded by Barbara Smith that the following items be approved by consent agenda:

- Council Regular Meeting – April 28, 2025, Minutes
- Finance Committee Meeting – April 10, 2025, Minutes

The motion carried unanimously (8-0) by show of hands with no abstentions.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

Staff Reports – The written reports were submitted to the Council prior to the meeting.

- Senior Minister Report – April
- Associate Minister of Pastoral Care and Visitation Report – April

No additional discussion was necessary.

Finance Committee Report – Financial Secretary Wanda Gillman submitted two written reports to the Council prior to the meeting.

- Balance Sheet Analysis as of April 30, 2025
- Analysis of Revenue and Expenses as of April 30, 2025

Wanda supplemented the written reports with an oral update that the April 2025 Regular Offering (\$46,738.80) and Total Income (\$56,674.73) were both under budget by roughly \$10,000 despite revenue from the athletic field rentals and funerals. Total Expenses for the month (\$100,404.96) were over budget due to annual HVAC maintenance and quarterly payments (i.e., insurance payment, computer maintenance) that hit in April. The actual total deficit year-to-date is \$40,299.95, which is slightly over budget by \$958.47.

A potential provider for the external audit has been identified.

The Finance Committee approved a new Travel & Expense Policy, which will be reviewed by the Personnel Committee and subsequently submitted to the Council for approval.

Physical Facilities Committee Report – Kirk Dalgaard provided an update on behalf of the Physical Facilities Ministry.

- 1) The HVAC changeover to air conditioning was completed.
- 2) Five exterior water faucets are leaking and need repair. The priority is to replace the hose bibb on the faucet by the Preschool for \$1,200.
- 3) Glant Roofing will address the roof leaks in the South Narthex and Preschool soon.
 - a. Amanda Boyer reported that the Preschool will be hiring painters in May and raised concerns about whether the roof repair may impact these plans. Kirk agreed to discuss this with Donovan Larson who is in regular contact with Kelly Blessing.
- 4) Two homeowners expressed concerns with tree limbs impacting fences and lower data utility lines. Bids are out for these repairs.
 - a. Phil Denton reminded the Council that if a limb falls across the property line, then it becomes the responsibility of the homeowner regardless of whether the tree sits on our property.
- 5) Bids were received for repairing sidewalks by the Preschool and the Parsonage. This was not in the budget and thus will require Council approval. The committee is looking for guidance from the Council on how extensive of a repair to pursue.
 - a. The Council agreed to inspect the sidewalks in question and review the bids prior to next month's meeting.

Marty Schmidt asked for an update on the sign replacement with an LED alternative. Kirk Dalgaard shared that Bob Beck was exploring how much of the existing sign could be preserved and bids were sought.

Amanda Boyer reported that the Preschool is interested in installing a camera to address problems with unauthorized individuals in the locked playground after hours. Ideally, a uniform solution would be installed across the property. Kirk Dalgaard agreed to take this back to the Physical Facilities Committee and Cemetery Board for alignment. Donovan Larson is preparing to mount the camera by the pavilion.

Barbara Smith added that a report was filed with the police about drivers abusing the asphalt on the back parking lot. A camera pointed toward the back lot may be beneficial to deter this behavior in addition to the increased police presence.

Marty Schmidt requested that the Council reactivate discussions about making the sanctuary more accessible so that members with mobility issues can worship beside loved ones without having to sit at the back of the room. He recommended that the Physical Facilities Committee explore the feasibility of replacing one or more of the long pews with the short pews currently alongside the A/V desk. Kirk Dalgaard agreed to take this back to the committee.

Personnel Committee Report – Barbara Smith shared that the committee is working to understand when Charlie Singler intends to retire. Phil Denton added that Charlie may wish to remain on staff part-time while training his replacement and that work is ongoing to review / update job descriptions for staff.

Preschool Board Report – Amanda Boyer shared that the Preschool is doing well. Many classes for the fall are full. The blood drive was successful, which resulted in Amazon gift cards for their benefit. The Scholastic Book Fair was successful. Painting of the Preschool is planned for the near future.

OLD BUSINESS:

PET Trustee Appointment – Barbara Smith reported that Bob Mandava agreed to finish the remainder of Scott Benack’s term. This would create a vacancy on the General Endowment Advisory Panel to be appointed by the President.

It was moved by Marty Schmidt and seconded by Wanda Gillman to appoint Bob Mandava to fill the remainder of the vacant seat on the Perpetual Endowment Trust. The motion carried unanimously (8-0) by show of hands with no abstentions.

Installation Date – Barbara Smith reported that Rev. Miller’s Installation is scheduled for Sunday, November 2nd at 3:00 pm.

Parsonage Lease – Barbara Smith reported that a certified letter was sent to the tenant on May 2nd regarding the dog on the property with instructions to contact Jeff Wagener or herself by phone. Neither individual has been contacted by the tenant. Donovan Larson spoke with the tenant prior to the letter being received and was told that the tenant was temporarily caring for her mother’s dog. Barbara also contacted Sunset Hills about whether any local codes prohibit specific breeds such as pit bulls – there are none.

The Council discussed the extent to which the property manager (DECA) should be involved in this matter. Concerns were raised about the roles & responsibilities of the 1) Council, 2) DECA, and 3) Physical Facilities Committee. Council members expressed disappointment that the tenant did not contact Barbara or Jeff and failed to communicate that the dog was removed.

Barbara Smith agreed to share a copy of the DECA contract with the Council and to contact DECA about the situation. Future discussion is needed regarding best practices for communicating with the tenant and whether to impose the fine in the lease agreement for violating the pet policy.

Sports Contracts – Marty Schmidt confirmed that the sports contract facilitator does not need to be a member of the Council. Barbara Smith agreed to post information in an upcoming eBlast requesting if anyone is interested in volunteering for this responsibility.

Establishing a Worship Committee – Tabled.

August Deaconess Event – Marty Schmidt relayed that Carol Barner contacted Debbie Heagle to withdraw the request. Barbara Smith agreed to confirm this with Debbie. This event occurs annually, so there may be an option to host next year. Barbara Smith stated that 175 people could be a tight fit based on Amy Richards’ funeral lunch with 15 round tables x 10 chairs.

NEW BUSINESS:

Emergency Response Committee – In light of the recent tornados in the St. Louis area, Rev. Miller recommended that the Council consider establishing a new committee to formalize procedures for natural disasters and common emergency situations (e.g., cardiac arrest). He suggested that natural disasters should be the initial priority. The UCC locally and nationally already has numerous resources to use as a starting point.

The Council discussed that some plans may already exist and require education. Amanda Boyer volunteered to advise this committee as an emergency response professional. The Council agreed to email Rev. Miller with the names of potential candidates to lead or serve on this committee.

Disaster Relief Proposal – Rev. Miller presented his initial proposal for a community benefit concert to raise funds for a yet-to-be-chosen cause related to the recent tornados. These events were successful at Emmanuel UCC, are relatively quick & easy to organize, cost very little to execute, can generate positive PR for St. Lucas UCC, and motivate the community to enter our sanctuary. The Council agreed to review the proposal (see attached) and discuss it next month.

2026 Council Positions – Barbara Smith encouraged Council members to begin considering executive positions for next year. Katy Forand, Phil Denton, and herself will be cycling off the Council at year-end. Wanda Gillman will have completed her second year as Financial Secretary.

A/V Tech Position – Barbara Smith asked Dencee to remove the job posting. These results of the employee selection process will be discussed in Executive Session.

Staff Vacations – This topic will be addressed in Executive Session.

The public session of the Church Council meeting recessed at 7:40 P.M.

(Minute marker: 1 hour/37 minutes)

Respectfully submitted,
Tracy Mulderig
Recording Secretary

The next regular meeting of the Church Council is scheduled for Monday, June 23rd at 6:00 pm.

Approved by the St. Lucas UCC Church Council on June 23, 2025

Guest Comments Prepared Statement by Marsha Fey

I sought this opportunity to speak this evening after dissecting and digesting the discussion regarding Saturday evening service during the semi-annual meeting, May 4th, 2025.

I corroborate Donovan's statement that at no time during my 4 year term on council did we discuss stopping the Saturday service.

We discussed securing worship leaders after Merrimon left and George chose not to continue in that capacity. Those discussions did not include a vetting process, going through the association or the conference. Marty took responsibility to fill the position, often on a week-to-week basis. I agreed to continue that endeavor in late December, 2024 without any guidelines contrary to what I had observed as a council member.

Julie Kies, an ordained UCC minister, member of this congregation, regular Sunday worshiper and choir member, started leading Saturday worship after several council members and choir members recommended her to Marty. Julie was contacted by Marty and our worship relationship began. That was my experience with Saturday worship as a council member.

My council term ended less than 6 months ago, I understand the challenges of making decisions that impact our fellow members. During my term council voted to purchase new hymnals. Vicki presented information about the hymnals on consecutive Sundays and offered printed examples of changed verbiage in the newer hymnal. The campaign moved forward, donations supported the purchase, the new hymnals arrived. However, when we started using the hymnals, members were unhappy with the updated language to traditional hymns. I heard and had strong, heartfelt comments directed at me and council in general. Comments of regret, frustration, and anger. To my knowledge no one was publicly rebuked, chastised, or judged. Compromise evolved, we now have a stack of integrated hymnals at the corner of every pew to accommodate the dissent – compromise offered.

Not so for the faithful group of our membership that have supported a different worship time, for more than 30 years! NO grace, NO compromise.

A decision made without discussion, engagement, or transparency. And most appalling, during the semi-annual meeting, from the lectern and the floor, members chose to malign and denigrate fellow members – thinking, feeling, faithful fellow members who have worshiped with and supported this congregation with their time, talent, and treasure. Opinionated, ill-conceived statements about our Saturday members being divisive and “their own congregation” require correction.

Vic Lenz has served on PET and has severed multiple terms on the Preschool Board, including his current term.

Sharyn Lenz organized the ushering schedule for all Saturday services.

Scott and Dianna Benack worked with the Community Meal throughout it's tenure. Scott served a term on council and served on PET until he resigned his membership in April of this year. Scott volunteered on the AV desk every Saturday unless planned otherwise, served on the AV committee from it's early days and helped with AV needs at special services, apparently going unnoticed behind the AV desk during Lenten services in the past.

Mike Bohn served on council.

Joe and Joan Perez were faithful Community Meal volunteers throughout the run of that mission.

Jerry and Mary Sue Pensel were active leaders in Caring Ministry for many years, they were instrumental in establishing the Victory Garden and spent many hours planting and harvesting vegetables to support local food pantries. Jerry was instrumental in the 125th anniversary committee, served on the Vision Team, church council and served a term as church council president.

Laurie Dalba was a faithful Community Meal volunteer and found a worship home for her special needs adult son on Saturday evening, he was a member until his untimely death.

Ann Rohr attended Zac and Lizzy and Easter egg hunts with her grandson, organized a table at the youth Trivia Night, and like many Saturday members, served on their ushering team.

George lead Saturday worship on his Candidate weekend. Council anticipated support from Saturday members.

The Giving Tree was moved from the closed, dark Social Hall to the Narthex in 2024, I estimate that 20% of the support for that mission came from our Saturday members.

Many baptisms took place on Saturday evenings, including my grandson, August. Saturday offered a more relaxed time for parents and easier access for those traveling long distances.

3 years ago 1 young man was confirmed on Saturday evening, a preferable setting for him to experience the Rite of Confirmation without feeling overwhelmed.

Saturday evening offered another worship opportunity in a more relaxed atmosphere.

Regarding the social aspect of worship, on Sunday morning as worshipers gather in a bright welcoming space with donuts and coffee ready for everyone, should we speculate that perhaps they only attend worship for that social time? More than likely, each table is occupied by the same people every week, should we pass judgement on their sincerity, their motivation for being at church, offer an infomercial of local restaurants to mock and minimize their care for each other and their desire for fellowship after worship? On Saturday evening the Social Hall is closed and dark so the Narthex became the “social space” for gathering to talk and share. Saturday worshipers organized their fellowship time appropriate to their worship time. The cavalier comments made by several fellow members at the semi-annual meeting were demeaning and offensive.

My daughter, Kristin, listened to the semi-annual meeting in it’s entirety and offered this response – I’m quoting Kristin

“I saw a quote that said ‘ Compassion doesn’t require comprehension’, I just wish someone would have said that before the semi-annual meeting. You don’t have to understand why people chose to worship and find community on Saturday evening. That does not mean that we should not offer compassion for members of this congregation that are grieving. Compassion should not be contingent on whether you attend church on Sunday morning. And you didn’t have to diminish your fellow members to feel justified in your decision to extinguish Saturday worship.” Close quote.

Comments made from the lectern and the floor indicate the thought that the only cohesive church is one that worships at a single service. At one time, St. Lucas had 3 Sunday services and Saturday evening – I don’t recall that continued attendance at 8:30 vs 9:45 vs 11 vs Saturday was divisive to St. Lucas as a whole. Multiple services offered worship opportunity to a wide range of people with various schedules.

I also reviewed council notes and found a note made at the August 23, 2022 council meeting, we were being encouraged to remember the value of communication, to make sure that the congregation knows what the council is “doing.”

That is the part that was missed in this process and continues to be opaque.

Perhaps the sun needs to shine on the WHY of your decision, the same question asked of every speaker before they leave the chancel.

In our Constitution and By-laws, part V the first item in section B states,

“All active members are entitled to the fellowship and the spiritual blessing of the church, and to the services of it’s Pastors, officials, and staff as well as the Christian support and sympathy of all members.”

You are the representative governing body for ALL members of this congregation. It is a solemn responsibility and as imperfect people we lean on the grace of our God, and hopefully serve with humbleness and humility.

I end with a quote from Mark Twain-

“The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government.”

I beseech you, my fellow St. Lucas members, be “good government” for all of us!

Thank you for your time.

Disaster Relief Proposal

Submitted by Rev. George Miller on May 22, 2025

What- Benefit concert in which 100% of the proceeds go to those affected by the May 16, 2025, tornado.

Why- On Friday, May 16, 2025, a tornado hit St. Louis, leaving over 20 miles of devastation, affecting homes, businesses, and churches. Moments like this can create a sense of worry and discomfort. A benefit concert featuring words and music of hope, lamentation, and a reminder of God's promises can be an uplifting experience that also unifies people and empowers them in knowing they are making a difference.

When- As the long-term effects of the tornado will last a long time, we can hold this benefit at a date and time to be determined.

Where- In the St. Lucas UCC sanctuary with performers on the chancel.

Who- So far myself, Linda Radick and her family said they can perform, with no fee. We could also invite the choir or soloists to perform. We would need 2 front door greeters, 2-4 ushers to take the Free Will or Love Offering, and 1-2 people to work AV. I do not imagine this being livestreamed.

How-

- 1) Pick a date; set a time.
- 2) Get word out via our Communications Director on social media, print, and Association/Conference e-mail. This includes a Press Release, allowing the event to be listed in local papers and a possible article.
- 3) Linda and I would work on a program, possibly inviting other musicians or churches to participate. Perhaps we also want a table selling water, soda, and snacks, all to go towards disaster relief.

Cost- Possibly creating a special envelope.

Obstacles-

- finding date/time to hold event
- discerning where the money is to go
- How do we decide where the money goes?
- Set up and break down of Narthex and Sanctuary

Benefits-

- For those who may not be able to swing a hammer or donate items, this allows them to know they are making a difference.
- St. Lucas can decide if the money is to go to a broad organization or to a specific place or person.
- Gets our name out into the community and brings people within our building.