

**SAINT LUCAS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 24, 2023, 6:00 pm - Zoom Hybrid/Room 19**

*(*This meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm by President, Marty Schmidt.)*

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

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

VISITORS PRESENT: Bill Biedenstein/Zoom, Bill Brinkhorst & Joy Dressel/Zoom, Seth Carruthers/Zoom, Ken Hamilton/Zoom, Dan Herron, Ellen Littleton/Zoom, Paul Litzsinger/Zoom, Cynthia Rosfeld, and Sue Simmons/Zoom | Ten visitors.

OPENING PRAYER:

The meeting was opened with a prayer by Barbara Smith.

GUEST COMMENTS:

Ellen Littleton shared the following comments - *“I believe that God is still talking to us. As a Christian, it's my practice to keep growing, keep listening & discovering new things to consider. I read a lot to learn about things new to me. I've been reading some of the books that people want removed from the school libraries. I've read This Book is Gay. Then I read Beyond the Gender Binary and now I am reading Fine, a comic book about gender. All are from the St. Louis County Library. I'm learning a lot about a subject new to me, having been schooled in the 1940s & 50s. These are people that are different from me. They are our loved ones, our relatives, & relatives of our friends. They are God's children too & deserve the same love & acceptance I have had all my life. They certainly need the love of our congregation. In John 10:16, Jesus said ‘there are other sheep not of this pen. I must bring them in also.’ And a Plug: We have a new Bible Study on Zoom! This is another way for me to learn & grow as a Christian. We're learning about the rise of Christians in the rest of the world. Come join us!”* (Pastor Vicki thanked Ellen for sharing her vision.)

CONSENT AGENDA:

- A.V. Committee Meeting - April 5, 2023, Minutes
- Council Minutes - Executive Session - February 9, 2023, & March 27, 2023
- Council Minutes - Public Session - February 27, 2023, & March 27, 2023
- Finance Committee Meeting - February 21, 2023, & March 21, 2023
- Pre-School Minutes - April 11, 2023

Paul asked that the Council minutes from the 3/27/23 Public Session be pulled for discussion.

With that exception, Jack moved and Barbara seconded the April 2023 Consent Agenda as submitted for approval. The motion was accepted unanimously by a show of hands.

Additional discussion of the 3/27/23 Council minutes confirmed Barbara's name as recording secretary was not listed on the Public Session minutes. Per Paul, the Public Session and the Executive Session are two separate documents. As such, both docs need to reflect the recording person's name on each. Barbara will make that addition before submitting them to Denee. With that notation, Jack moved and Kathy

seconded the March 27, 2023, Public Session Council minutes for approval. The motion was accepted unanimously by a show of hands.

STAFF REPORTS:

Pastor Vicki -

- Juanita commented with amazement at the number of administrative tasks Pastor Vicki is faced with in her job. Pastor Vicki thanked her for noticing/commenting.
- Barbara was pleased to read Debbie and Jeff are the backbone of the church office. And that Jeff is doing a great job. This allowed Pastor Vicki to comment additionally and Paul agreed that Jeff is doing a good job “picking up all those ‘loose’ pieces”.

There were no other questions or comments for Pastor Vicki.

Pastor Carole -

- A celebration of about 30 people -all ages- attended the Jesus Revolution movie yesterday.
- Graduation Sunday is June 11th, in addition to New Member Sunday that day.
- Pastor Vicki added that semi-annual reports are due to the office by May 15th in preparation for the semi-annual congregational meeting on May 28th.

There were no other questions or comments for Pastor Carole.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Paul Simons updated the Council on the current financial status of the church and presented them with the financial statements for March 2023.

- General Fund Cash was \$807,614 on March 31, 2023, versus \$574,959 as of March 31, 2022. These balances included Lorine Nolan funds of \$405,900 in 2023 and \$534,423 in 2022. The significant increase in General Fund Cash was the result of the receipt of \$302,000 from the Employee Retention Credit (“ERC”) program.
- Regular Offerings for the month of March and year-to-date were both under budget. Miscellaneous General Income was over budget, which was primarily due to the ERC money. This was partly offset by less-than-budgeted endowment money to be received in April.
- March General Fund Expenses were over our anticipated budget by \$10,000. This variance was primarily caused by storm-related expenses, as well as the payment of the quarterly insurance premium, which is budgeted for April. The excess expenses were partly offset by lower-than-budgeted staff wages and the absence of Search Committee Expenses. Year-to-date, General Fund Expenses approximated budget with an unfavorable variance of approximately \$3,300.
- This all resulted in a March General Fund excess of \$263,188 and a year-to-date excess of \$195,407. Both excesses reflect the ERC money received, partly offset by the absence of endowment money of approximately \$46,000.

Additional discussion of the ERC money revealed the vendor who provided the work which allowed our refund will charge St. Lucas a 15% fee. Also, the total monies received (three checks in March and one check in April) will be applied as a 68/32 split between St. Lucas Church and St. Lucas Preschool.

Marty asked for a motion to approve those intended percentages. Jack moved and Kathy seconded the 68/32 split of the total ERC refund as discussed for approval. The motion was accepted unanimously by a show of hands.

In addition, Marty wanted the Council to be aware of the approximately \$5K balance in the Youth Mission Trip fund which has been carried over since 2020 when that year's trip was canceled due to COVID. The Council's opinion was that "Yes" those monies should stay in that fund. Everyone feels confident Amy Bush will be a good steward of those funds. No vote was required for this item.

OLD BUSINESS:

A.V. Equipment Update (*Last minute addition to the agenda*) -

- Three cameras and one controller were ordered from CCI last week. The upgrades to those items resulted in \$6,777.
 - A future upgrade of an additional piece of equipment will cost \$1,620. This will result in a total of \$8,397 over what the insurance company has recommended as replacements.
- Outdated brackets and wiring for the new equipment will be replaced for the eventual installation of the equipment. Quotes are currently being secured at the time of this meeting.
 - Future discussion of the installation and wiring costs associated with this equipment will be continued as bids are finalized.
 - Note - new placement locations of future equipment were being discussed by the A.V. team prior to the lightning strike. Those plans were intended for use in the future. However, due to the lightning strike damage, those plans are now being put into place in the upcoming weeks/months.
 - \$5,200 is currently the balance in the A.V. fund.

Marty asked for a motion to approve the additional \$8,397 needed for new A.V. equipment with the understanding the \$5,200 A.V. fund will be used to offset that amount. Barbara moved and Jack seconded those monies to be approved as indicated. The motion was accepted unanimously by a show of hands.

Open & Affirming -

- The Social Justice Committee approached Pastor Vicki prior to the March Council meeting with concerns regarding the current ONA status of St. Lucas which was halted due to COVID. Since last month's ONA discussion at the March Council meeting, the following events have occurred:
 - A core group of members from the (former) Diversity Team met to exchange notes and their recollections of what had been accomplished prior to COVID.
 - Discussions between Pastor Vicki, Marty Schmidt, and other congregants resulted in a new understanding that the Diversity Team had accomplished more than what was previously understood.
 - The Social Justice Committee recommended a presentation be made to the Council with the hope of resurrecting a new Diversity Team.
 - Pastor Vicki, Marty Schmidt, Cynthia Rosfeld, and Barbara Smith met with Barb Biedenstein of Gateway ONA on April 21st to discuss the necessary steps if this process is resumed.
- This resulted in a presentation read to the Council this evening. (**See the attached doc.*)

After that reading questions by the group were encouraged by Cynthia Rosfeld and Barbara Smith. Violet asked what plans the new ONA team has moving forward. Barbara answered the primary goal is to have St. Lucas secure an ONA designation by the congregation. Cynthia reiterated we are trying to decide what type of church we want to be. We are much smaller. We have lost members. We want to live within the ONA philosophy. And by being Open and Affirming we can proclaim that standing. This in turn helps people feel more comfortable coming into a church they may never have visited before. Kathy added if we approve ONA the UCC will attest that St. Lucas UCC is an Open and Affirming congregation. Pastor Vicki added that designation is not only for the LGBTQ population but also for the benefit of their friends, families, and allies who may also be uncomfortable with conversations that take place.

Jack asked what are you -Cynthia and Barbara- wanting from the Council at this time. The answer was we want to be able to resume the process of working toward ONA approval. Phil asked what do you mean by starting up again. Barbara replied to form a new committee, to work through the steps within the UCC's Coalition workbook to secure an ONA status. Our intent is to have transparency with the Council.

Phil asked if this is something that needs to be voted on by the congregation. Correct? He is very concerned about the church getting smaller and losing members over this topic. "I don't think this church can stand another purge of our membership." Phil asked that the minutes reflect his concern over losing members with this endeavor. Pastor Vicki and Marty both voiced the opinion that many of those opposed to ONA have already left the congregation. Violet commented that if we don't try something new in an attempt to get younger members the church could die out on its own. Pastor Vicki added, "We've lost a lot of members on both sides as we've tried to sit on the fence".

Phil also raised the comment that he thought St. Lucas is already a "welcoming" church. This type of (ONA) labeling reminds him of The Green Book. There are risks and issues here that should be discussed. Paul commented that centuries ago when Christians were persecuted they secretly advertised by using the sign of the fish. The display as an ONA congregation is not much different than that.

Marty took the opportunity to explain that prior to the previous ONA educational effort, he too was under the impression that St. Lucas is a welcoming church. However, after participating in meetings and discussions he now understands the difference. He wants to be sure this is a deliberate process. We need to show St. Lucas UCC is growing and trying to move forward.

Barbara added the difference is, being "welcoming" vs. displaying "affirmation" to anyone who walks through our doors and not just within our doors.

After last month's meeting, Katy was under the impression that ONA should not be pursued during the interim time at St. Lucas. Pastor Vicki advised interim time is mainly to provide continuity of leadership. Plus, Pastor Carole added the interim time will not last as long as what's needed to complete the ONA process. Pastor Carole also encouraged a completely new team and committee name.

Donovan shared an example of an instance while shopping at Walmart. What we may think of as reasonable and normal and "why do we even need to do it" is not the same as what others may think about an action.

Additionally, Pastor Carole offered a comment about working toward ONA at Grace UCC during the Michael Brown/Black Lives Matter movement.

**(Change of order on the agenda - NEW BUSINESS - Memorial Committee Request)*

- Jack submitted a request from The Memorial Committee for a piece of equipment to be used with the grand piano in the sanctuary. *Seth was on hand via his phone/Zoom to answer any questions the Council may have concerning this item.
- A piano is made “primarily of wood, felt, wool, and metal. Fluctuations in humidity can impact all of these elements. In the same way, a door sticks on a humid day, or hair gets frizzy, humidity fluctuations impact the components of your piano”.
- *The Piano Life Saver* levels out humidity fluctuations, alleviating many negative side effects and ultimately prolonging the life of your piano.
- This device at its most elemental, continuously monitors the humidity inside your piano and gently dries and humidifies to maintain a stable environment. Its purchase price and installation are \$675.
- Pastor Carole added that a heat/AC register sits directly underneath the piano bench.
- This product is expected to reduce our annual tuning visits to approximately one per year.

Marty asked for a motion to approve this \$675 piece of equipment. Jack moved and Barbara seconded to be approved as indicated. The motion was accepted unanimously by a show of hands.

OLD BUSINESS continued -

>Physical Facilities Ministry - The reports from this group are being shared by Ministry Chair, Donovan Larson:

- Lightning strike - most of the current information pertaining to the A.V. equipment was supplied by Dan in his A.V. report
- Lawn Care & Sports Fields - We are one day into the new contract with M S Lawncare and as hoped, they were able to lower their bid to \$5,800. By mid-week, the two infields will be in much better shape, which the coaches are excited about. It should be noted that Joan Morris with her volunteer work on the grounds also saves us money and work by the landscape crew. Joan is defined by The Botanical Gardens as a Master-Gardener. Her ongoing physical labor and plant knowledge have contributed to St. Lucas’ beautiful campus. A Johnny-On-The-Spot will be delivered tomorrow and will be placed on the north side of the maintenance garage. In addition, Donovan pulled out a trash can and placed it in the pavilion for the coaches/teams to use.
- The Pre-School Parking Lot - a contract for this work has been signed. Coordination for scheduling the work is currently being discussed with the Pre-School office.
- The Parsonage - Donovan shared that all parsonage work is completed. It came in under budget.
- Leaks - Three or four leaks are being reported in the building which Donovan is currently researching. One is located in the North Narthex. As a starting point, Donovan will contact Old World Roofing who completed the most recent slate work. Marty asked Donovan to speak with them regarding our two lightning rods to determine if they were replaced after that roofing work, as he was under the impression they were not which may have contributed to our lightning strike. Donovan advised there are two lightning rods currently in place. One is on the steeple and one is on the chimney in the vicinity of the handicap ramp to the main entrance. That point is also one of the spots that reportedly has a leak. He will discuss all of this with Old World.
- Neighbors with Fence on Church Property - This topic is pending additional discussion between Jeff and Marty. More discussion of this issue will take place at next month’s Council meeting.

>By-Laws Task Force - This group had its most recent meeting last week. They went through the current Constitution and By-laws line-by-line. A lot of revisions were suggested, in addition to cleaning up some of the language. Marty is hopeful they will have something to present to the Council at the June meeting. It is their intention to have it finalized in time for the annual meeting in November.

Phil also advised the Council The Articles of Incorporation for a 501(c)(3) were amended in 1964 by a formal decree. However, presently if you want to incorporate a 501(c)(3) there is a long list of items you are empowered to do. However, the list St. Lucas would be subject to is one page long and is insufficient in Phil's opinion. Vicki interjected that if you're talking about the 501(c)(3), we/St. Lucas is derived from the denomination. And she feels that what Phil is referring to does not relate to the 501(c)(3) status for churches/St. Lucas.

Phil feels the status needs to be updated/expanded to give St. Lucas all the powers and rights that it is entitled by law to have. For clarification, Paul interjected that Pastor Vicki is talking about the "IRS code" and Phil is referring to "state statutes". The issue from 1964 is separate from the rewriting of our Constitution and By-laws. Phil also proposed that the Administration of Powers be rewritten and "tightened up" in the future. Bottom line, Phil feels that when we update the By-Laws that "we specify what all the powers are". We need to make it a cleaner and clearer document.

>Open Council Position - There is a church member currently discerning this position. Marty had hoped to have their answer by this evening. Therefore, this item is still pending.

NEW BUSINESS:

>St. Lucas Victory Garden - Debbie Ball sent a letter to the Council requesting that mulch be added to the garden as it is long overdue and the soil is eroding. Marsha feels Debbie is referring to the pathways between each bed. M S Lawn Care has already delivered the needed mulch at a cost of \$2,800. This line item/budget currently holds \$2,587. The Council does not want them to deplete their budget for this expense. Donovan suggested the Council pay \$1,000 against the \$2,800 bill allowing The Victory Garden budget to pay the remaining \$1,800. This allows them to keep \$787 on hand for any additional expenses they may incur in 2023.

Marty asked for a motion to approve \$1,000 to be given to the Victory Garden for their mulch. Donovan so moved and Jack seconded it to be approved as indicated. The motion was accepted unanimously by a show of hands.

Pastor Vicki reminded the group we need to keep in mind the active membership, participation, and support The Victory Garden receives from our congregation and the community. Katy suggested an audit be requested of The Victory Garden. How many people participate, does any of the produce go to charitable groups, is it grown for personal use, etc? Marty agreed. Paul advised the Council that any group is responsible to report to the Council at the request of the Council. It could be as simple as writing an update for a future e-Blast. Marty will contact Debbie B. to advise her of the Council's decision regarding the mulch and to ask her for a brief summary of the current activity in The Victory Garden.

>Personnel Ministry - Marty informed the Council of the need to revive a Personnel Committee. There are personnel issues occurring... one example is Charlie currently has some questions. He asked Council members if there is anyone in the congregation with HR experience. Paul advised he has run HR departments in the past and has formerly served on that team. Paul also informed the group Joy Dressel has served on that committee in the past as well. Marty will take this under advisement and reach out for assistance.

>Land Use Task Force - Marty feels we need to form a task force to determine the best use for the land -10 acres- north of the church/cemetery. He's wondering if there is anyone in the congregation that has a real estate background so we can begin the process of researching this topic. Some names mentioned were Dave Johnston and Cynthia Rosfeld. Marty asked Katy if she'd be willing to head up this group as she is invested in the concession stands/ball fields plus she has a real estate background. Katy offered that based on the foot traffic she's observed there is a need to maintain that green space for the community. Marsha agreed. Her opinion is we need to be good stewards of the property. And that is exactly why Marty feels a need to pursue and focus on the best use of the property.

Violet added that she and Donovan have chatted about our current use vs. the fees we are charging. Violet has done a brief survey of how our fields rate compared to other fields in the area. She feels our fees are very low in comparison to what we are able to offer to the community. St. Lucas bills teams based on a daily rate by season. Whereas many other organizations bill by the hours. Violet would feel better about quoting new rates after she has crunched some numbers, by hours vs. days to make a recommendation. She feels that with the improved fields as discussed, the port-a-potty and our newly added concessions could only help support a rate increase. Violet will prepare information to share on this topic for the next Council meeting.

At this time, Marty released visiting members from this meeting and closed their Zoom connection so the Council could go into an Executive session.

*Please see the 4/24/23 Executive Session meeting minutes for the discussion that immediately followed this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Smith,
Recording Secretary