

SAINT LUCAS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
October 23, 2023, 6:00 pm - Zoom Hybrid/Room 19

*(*This meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm by Vice-President, Donovan Larson.)*

MEMBERS PRESENT: Marsha Fey, Katy Forand, Kathy Herron/Zoom, Donovan Larson, Jack Laudenslager, Marty Schmidt/Zoom (from Kenya), Paul Simons, Barbara Smith, and Juanita Wagner/Zoom | Nine members.
(Council Members Absent - Violet Brooks & Phil Denton.)

MINISTER PRESENT: Rev. Vicki Hampton

VISITORS PRESENT: Dan Herron/AV for OWL

ZOOM VISITORS PRESENT: Bill Brinkhorst & Joy Dressel, Brian & Becky Haley, Ken Hamilton, and Ellen Littleton | Six visitors.

OPENING PRAYER: The meeting was opened with a prayer by Kathy Herron.

GUEST COMMENTS: There were none.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- Cemetery Board - September 20, 2023 Minutes
- Council Meeting - September 25, 2023, Minutes
- Council Meeting, Executive Session - September 25, 2023, Minutes
- Finance Ministry - September 19, 2023, Minutes
 - *Per Kathy Herron - a minor correction is needed to these minutes. Under New Business, i.e. Distribution of Committee Meeting minutes should be “distributed to Council” not “distributed to Committee”. Paul Simons will make that correction to the minutes.*
- Membership & Evangelism Ministry - August 1, 2023 & September 5, 2023, Minutes
- Physical Facilities Ministry - September 25, 2023 & October 19, 2023, Minutes
- Preschool Board Meeting - October 10, 2023, Minutes
- Work Day - Summary List of Completed Items - October 15, 2023

Marty moved and Barbara seconded the October 23, 2023 Consent Agenda as submitted for approval. The motion was accepted unanimously by a show of hands.

STAFF REPORTS:

Pastor Vicki - Pastor Vicki had nothing more to add to her written report. Juanita and Barbara each asked questions concerning two topics that are on tonight’s agenda and will be addressed later in the meeting. No other questions were expressed.

Donovan noted the passing of Joan Gildehaus and Jerry Pensel whose funerals were within the past week.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Paul Simons advised the following information for September 2023:

- General Fund Cash was \$620,061 on September 30, 2023, versus \$476,513 as of September 30, 2022. These balances included Money Market funds of \$408,767 in 2023 and \$520,012 in 2022.
- Regular Offerings for the month of September were under budget by only \$1,315. Year-to-date Regular Offerings are \$15,000 under budget but are \$52,000 over September 2022. Miscellaneous General

Income for September reflects the reclassification of \$6,800 of the insurance check received in July and \$1,250 paid for Maui Relief. The insurance money has been reclassified to the expense accounts charged when insurance claim expenses were incurred. Year-to-date, Miscellaneous General Income was over budget due to the Pfister bequest and the ERC money, which was partly offset by the absence of money from the Shirley Beyersdorfer Fund. This fund fell below \$200,000 on December 31, 2022, and, therefore, can't pay any money to the General Fund in 2023.

- September General Fund Expenses were over our anticipated budget by \$8,200. This variance was primarily caused by higher-than-budgeted lawn and building maintenance expenses, outside custodial services, the confirmation retreat, and extra mission payment, which were partly offset by the absence of custodial wages and the reclassification of insurance proceeds. Year-to-date, General Fund Expenses were over budget by \$36,000, which primarily reflects the West Lot resurfacing, ball field maintenance, plumbing repairs, and parsonage flood remediation. These additional expenses were partly offset by the absence of Search Committee expenses.
- This all resulted in a September General Fund deficit of \$5,945 but a year-to-date excess of \$42,914, caused by the variations discussed above. The Net Deficit for September was \$31,595, while the year-to-date deficit was \$6,091, compared to a budgeted excess of \$19,457 and a year-to-date budgeted deficit of \$147,204. The September unfavorable variance principally reflects the Maui Relief payment, the absence of the Shirley Beyersdorfer income, extra building and lawn maintenance expenses, the confirmation retreat, and extra mission payments. Year-to-date, the favorable Net Deficit variance reflects the Shirley Pfister and ERC monies received, partly offset by the absence of the Shirley Beyersdorfer income, coupled with the absence of Search Committee Expenses and various facility repairs discussed above.

Paul asked if there were any questions. Marsha asked about the new phone system. Paul replied the current phone system will only be supported until 12/31/24. The new phone system will be in place for 1/1/25. Paul and Pastor Vicki advised that Jeff has been researching the needed system in preparation for this future conversion.

Physical Facilities Ministries:

Donovan presented the following information to the Council -

- Donovan advised the aerating and overseeding have now been completed to our sports fields by MS Lawncare at a cost of approximately \$4K.
- The St. Lucas UCC Work Day was completed on 10/15/23 and deemed successful. A hot dog/brat/chili lunch was provided following the work. Luncheon entertainment was supplied by the Radick's. Katy was commended on a project well done. As were Ken Fey and Joe Forand for their grilling expertise.
- Katy reported The Cemetery Board requested -at the last minute- the cleaning of the cemetery sign and the painting of the iron grill on the stone signs.
- In addition, Katy advised the cemetery sign was cleaned and subsequently removed. The plan is for Kirk Dalgaard and Carl Heine to replace the rotting wood on it before it is reinstalled.
- Katy also reported during the work day a breaker box and a stone marker were uncovered near the pavilion. The stone is inscribed *On Behalf of the St. Lucas Outdoor Ministry*. Something to think about, should we resurrect that ministry? In addition, Donovan commented that we need to put a padlock on that breaker box.
- Donovan reported the hand railings to the main door steps/ramps (half of them) have been painted and the remainder will be completed within the upcoming days as weather allows.
- Donovan also advised that after last month's discussion in Council about the need for no trespassing signs on various spots of the fields, he "jumped the gun" and had some made. Therefore he's in possession of approximately 15 signs. However, upon further discussion with others, he's now holding off with posting.

He'd like to meet with Phil when he returns from vacation for guidance. Is there a better way to word the signs? Pastor Vicki added we don't want to encourage vandalism by the mere presence of that type of sign. Katy encouraged consistency with the use of the signs to mitigate liability. Marsha reminded the group we have much spillover from the neighborhood to be aware of. The overall concern is striking a balance for protection of liability for the church while also trying to be a good neighbor to our neighbors who enjoy having green space beyond their backyards.

- Donovan also reported about his efforts to secure an updated bid from Old World Roofing (their bid is now over three months old). He's still waiting for a bid from Glandt Roofing. His hope is to have both bids ready for review at next month's Council meeting. Additional discussion regarding the cost of the roofing repairs plus when/should we do it. Paul and Jack reminded Donovan that \$50K was added to the 2024 budget for just those repairs, pending congregational approval. The consensus of the group is yes, we need to pursue that maintenance as soon as we are able.
- Donovan also advised he's secured a current bid from the same company that performed the resurfacing of the Preschool lot. They bid \$21K to reseal and restripe the big parking lot east of the church/cemetery. His question is do we want to wait and get a new bid to have the work performed in the spring or have the work done this fall? Discussion continued about the preschool and sports groups needing to play, and that traffic could interfere with the repaving. Marty added the experience with his own driveway at home with repaving, as they typically encourage the work to be performed during the fall before freezing temps set in. Barbara asked if a second bid is needed since we already know the workmanship of Pioneer due to the results with the Preschool lot. Donovan feels a second bid is needed for comparison due to the high cost of such a project. Marty made the motion and Jack seconded that after securing a second bid IF Pioneer's \$21K bid is the better of the two, we proceed with having the work done as soon as possible. All present affirmed that motion.

OLD BUSINESS:

> Open & Affirming Task Force - Barbara Smith reported we currently have the following members who have agreed to be a part of this group: Bill Brinkhorst, Kirk Dalgaard, Karen Papin, Cynthia Rosfeld, and herself, Barbara Smith. Two students are being considered to allow for a younger point of view, although only one has been confirmed. The team is scheduled to be commissioned in church on Sunday, November 5th. The team is also in the process of scheduling an informal gathering to talk about goals, planned participation, etc. We are hopeful the gathering will take place before 11/5/23.

> Accounting Software Update - Paul shared that Pastor Vicki, Jeff Wagener, and himself all feel good with the REALM software package. He also advised that Sue Simmons feels good about the "people-side" of the software for the use of tracking membership. Regarding the accounting portion of the package, the Preschool has also given their "thumbs-up" on this decision. The monthly fees are approximately the same as what we are currently paying. REALM's training fees will be a bit less than what we experienced in the past. The most positive benefit of it is the learning curve will be reduced since REALM is a division of the financial software currently being used by the church. In addition, it is cloud-based which is another plus as it will eliminate the need for a server. Barbara made the motion to approve the purchase of the REALM package for use as the new financial software by St. Lucas UCC. Marty seconded the motion. Donovan asked for any discussion. Pastor Vicki advised the church will incur a fee of approximately \$1,500 for conversion and training. In addition, the Preschool will pay about half of the training costs. Paul added this is less than the other two packages reviewed. Kathy asked what the anticipated conversion date was to be. Paul answered on January 1, 2024. The vote to approve the REALM financial software was unanimous.

>Land Use Task Force - Marty advised he attended the last Preschool Board meeting earlier this month and shared his dream of a possible new Preschool building on the back ten acres. His idea was met with a lukewarm response from The Preschool. Marty stated, "Their points are valid". Ken Graesser is skeptical that it could be done in a fashion that is affordable. Subsequently, he has sent Marty possible projected costs of such a project versus the Preschool's actual current revenue. In addition, the teachers/staff expressed concerns about a new facility being built as an "income generator". They are uneasy that a new, modern facility may allow them to lose their personality/family feel...the ambiance they've generated over the last 50 years. Marty assured them that money is not the issue, but rather being a good steward of the property. With that assurance, they agreed to let Marty/Council pursue an initial exploration of such an endeavor. What consequence will it present? It would have to be a cost-effective project that would preserve the nature of the current Preschool. Marty was appreciative of their input. And in light of the Preschool Board's comments, Marty has not yet pursued any conversation with a senior-care facility as a tandem option. Marty also shared that Ken contacted Marty after the meeting suggesting "re-tooling" the current property. Perhaps expanding the west end of the building. All good thoughts... Again as Donovan and Marty both reiterated, the primary motive of this Council is and will continue to be the best way to be good stewards of our green space. Looking at all options is never a bad thing even if it only means to continue improved maintenance and upkeep of the fields for sports.

>Bridge Minister - For his own information and as preparation for tonight's meeting Donovan contacted Rev. Damien Lake to ask how a church secures a Bridge Minister for their church. According to Rev. Lake, once Pastor Carole and Pastor Vicki finish their assignments here, St. Lucas UCC will have finalized our interim process. In the event that we have not yet called a Senior -settled- Minister from the Search Committee by the time Pastor Vicki leaves, the alternative available to us will be a Bridge Minister or a Transitional Minister. The first step would be calling a Bridge Minister. The difference between a Bridge Minister and a Transitional Minister is who the "calling" body is, i.e. the congregation versus the Council. A Bridge Minister would stay on board as long as their St. Lucas UCC contract stipulates.

>Choral Area Changes - Per Marty, there is nothing new on this topic. In summary, prior discussions have been about rearranging the location of the piano and the position of the choir in order to 1.) get better sound quality and 2.) preserve the piano against humidity and HVAC extremes.

>Other Old Business - Kathy Herron reported on the Gratitude (Senior's) Luncheon earlier this month. 140 invitations were sent out. 61 members including their guests RSVP'd as yes/attending. However, 10 canceled the day of the luncheon. The resulting headcount was about 51 attendees. The program included recognition of clergy present, recognition of the Caring Ministers -past and present- and a message from Pastor Vicki. A Welcome message from Barbara Smith was given on behalf of the Council. Kelly Blessing gave information about the Preschool, in addition to a wonderful program supplied by some of the Preschool students. Pastor Vicki led the group in grace prior to the enjoyment of a delicious meal. This was followed up with a short church service in the sanctuary which included communion. Many positive comments were received from those in attendance. Kathy offered her gratitude and affirmation to the ministry leaders Judy Geiger, Sue Simmons, Linda Simons, Pat Stephens, and all others who helped in any way with this special luncheon meal.

NEW BUSINESS:

>Annual Meeting - This is scheduled for November 12th, after Sunday church. Donovan asked Marty to confirm that the updated Constitution and Bylaws will be given to the congregation two weeks prior to the meeting for their review. Per Marty, those changes/strike-outs with explanations of why the changes were made have been available to the congregation for the last couple of weeks. There was a link in a recent Council Conversation for our members. A short discussion continued regarding who is available to serve as parliamentarian at the Annual Meeting. Two suggestions were given to Marty. He will check with those individuals for their availability.

> Scholarship Endowment - Paul reported that he, Jeff, and Pastor Vicki had a Zoom meeting with the Ori family. Mrs. Ori's parents -Tom & Shirley Moore- were members of St. Lucas many years ago. They have contacted the church as they're interested in establishing a \$200K scholarship fund in honor of their grandparents. It will cover tuition, room/board, and books. The scholarship is for any school, anywhere, and is open to any student. The caveat to this scholarship is that Mrs. Ori has to be on the board of trustees and will have the right of first refusal regarding whom the scholarship will be awarded. Plus, their family's descendants will have the first priority of the scholarship money. Marsha asked how much money would be available annually to the recipient, and also asked, "So the \$200K would be endowed in a trust and the scholarship would be the money the endowment makes every year?" Pastor Vicki answered yes, and the annual revenue would be about \$4-6K each year. Paul also shared "Why would we want to do this?" It would not benefit St. Lucas in any way. It would require additional administration from our staff. Plus it does not benefit individual members of our church. Pastor Vicki added, "It does not fit into our ministry vision". Marty shared that in his opinion they are asking us to do all of the management work for an endowed scholarship. He knows there are ways you can form a private foundation to grant all scholarship money there is to offer. Marty's impression is they're trying to avoid the expense of paying someone else to manage this trust for them. So by offering it to a church all of the work would fall on us. Marty is a "hard no" on this topic. Paul also added the exposure of someone suing St. Lucas because we declined an application. Their scholarship sets up future problems for St. Lucas UCC. The consensus of the group is that we decline their request. Paul asked if Jeff would do that follow-up. Pastor Vicki advised either she or Jeff.

> Cemetery's Share of Accounting Software - The Cemetery Board has been asked to contribute to the one-time setup fee (\$79) plus a portion of the monthly fees (\$36) for the new REALM Financial program where their budget line items will be reflected. They've opted to *not* chip in. To understand the past history of this decision one must know the following: At one time the Sexton house was considered part of the cemetery property and a portion of that house rent was paid to the cemetery budget. The Cemetery Board also paid a portion of the Sexton's salary. Yet, the Cemetery Board no longer handles maintenance and upkeep of that house/property as they did in the past. The house is owned and maintained by the St. Lucas church and its budget. Also, in the past, there was a designated staff member in the office who would process the cemetery accounts and paperwork. And, The Cemetery Board would contribute to that person's salary. However, that is not presently the case. Currently, those duties are a part of Debbie's workload. Yet, the Cemetery Board does not contribute any funds toward Debbie's salary. Bottomline, agreements about who pays for what and what The Cemetery Board should now be paying for have changed since 2022. Practices that were in place no longer apply. Pastor Vicki added this is a "silo mentality" attitude. Therefore, Marty feels a meeting with The Cemetery Board is warranted when he gets back from Kenya. He'd like to meet with Katy (the Council's liaison to The Cemetery Board) to discuss this topic at length. Marty feels we are all working for the same congregation, for the benefit of St. Lucas UCC. He doesn't want us in an antagonistic relationship, bickering with one another. Guidelines that were formerly in place yet no longer apply due to changed circumstances need to be addressed and redefined. This misunderstanding with them needs to be resolved. No further discussion will be completed tonight.

> Backpack Program Needing Additional Funds - Our Backpack program has doubled from 37 in 2022, every other week to a current headcount of 69 in 2023. Katy added this week's count was 59. Currently, they are waiting to see if there will be any money coming in from Meals on Wheels. Plus Southminster Presbyterian has also been helping with snacks this year. Paul interjected that those are 2023 expenses. He clarified for Katy that we're looking at an adjustment to the 2024 budget of an increase of \$3K. After a moment to think through their expenses, Katy concurred with that amount. Therefore, Paul made a motion to increase the 2024 Backpack budget by \$3K. Marty seconded that motion. Without any additional discussion, all those in favor raised their hands. The vote was confirmed unanimously.

>Other New Business -

- Katy advised The Cemetery Board has requested an additional budget line/description item to be used for cremains in 2024. There is an area near the fence on the NW side of the cemetery they have identified which is too small for full casket plots yet large enough to be used for cremains/urns. A short discussion developed about unmarked graves in addition to fees for full-sized plots versus cremains. Marty made a motion to allow The Cemetery Board to create a new line item for single-spot cremains. Paul seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to approve their request.
- Pastor Vicki asked to speak about the Christmas weekend schedule for this year. FYI - Christmas Eve is on Sunday. Christmas Day is on Monday. After speaking with the staff she would like to propose the following: 1.) No Saturday night service on 12/23/23, 2.) The Christmas Eve services are to be held Sunday night at 7 pm & 9 pm, and 3.) The Christmas Day service will be held at 10 am only. After a very brief discussion, Barbara made a motion to allow her proposed schedule. Donovan seconded the motion. With no additional discussion, the motion was passed unanimously.

Marty asked for the Council to go into an Executive Session at this time. The Council said thank you and good night to the Visitors on Zoom. Dan closed the Zoom session and left the room so the Council could continue their meeting privately.

*NOTE - This ended the Public Session of the October 2023 Council meeting.

(Minute marker: 1 hour / 44 minutes)

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Smith,
Recording Secretary