

ST LUCAS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING - MARCH

3/23/2021

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Simons, Debbie Ball, Gregg Heutel, Don Lang, Jack Laudenslager, Marty Schmidt, Juanita Wagner, Joy Dressel, Randy Jurgensen, Justin Wenk, Dave Johnston, Marsha Fey

MEMBERS ABSENT: Joanne Scheidt, Al Lichtenstein, Carol Stelmach

STAFF PRESENT: Vicki Hampton

The March 2021 Council meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Council President, Paul Simons.

OPENING PRAYER – Don Lang led us with an opening prayer.

LOMBARD MENNONITE PEACE CENTER PRESENTATION – Jay Wittmeyer, Executive Director and Devon Miller from the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center gave us a presentation about their program. Jay gave us a background about the center and the services they provide today to churches and clergy. Jay is an ordained minister in Church of the Brethren. Devon is program staff and a Mennonite pastor in a local church who works with Jay. Jay shared a document that outlines a 6-stage process which involves meeting with leadership, getting approval, and meeting with the congregation. They eventually move to a healing phase that tries to neutralize hurts and issues. The Peace Center would ask for ownership by the leadership of St. Lucas and also have a similar meeting with the entire congregation to ask them if they are ready to do mediation with a vote from 2/3 of members present of the body of the church. Jay explained that he would hold two different workshops on a Saturday, and an all day event looking at conflicts, etc. They also do small group sessions that run about 90 minutes, 12 people in a group.

Questions from Council:

- What is the time frame? Jay said we typically say 8 months to a year, with 6 key Saturdays.
- How would this work since we can't fill the church with meetings now due to COVID? Jay said he's been doing smaller groups now with maybe 25 people maximum during COVID because he said it's hard to do healing on zoom.
- How would not having a settled pastor affect this mediation process? Jay said it's a little easier with an interim. Vicki said that part of the goal of an interim is to help resolve conflict, and her goal is to help the congregation move forward.
- What is the time commitment for council members? Jay said it's significant and you really want council members to participate in it. Council members will have about 30 to 40 hours of commitment.
- How many years has Jay been doing this? Jay said about 20 years.
- What is the probability of success for a medium to small size church? Jay said it depends on the participation of the members and if individuals are able to move beyond blame and reflect.
- What is the price for our size church? Jay's initial estimate is between \$35,000 and \$40,000.

Council members discussed their short term and long term goals: Some of those included:

- Seeing the congregation get back to talking and enjoying each other.
- Seeing a little more kindness toward each other when discussing polarizing issues.
- We've lost the ability to meet people where they are and put ourselves in their shoes.
- We need to move past unkind words said to people, some literally untrue.

- Moving from “you” language to “I” language.
- As a consequence of a successful mediation, maybe grow the church back up to a larger congregation again. See people be happy again and smile and maybe bring some people back to the church.
- It would be nice to be a church that welcomes people who don’t think exactly alike.
- The polarization of the church is like the society we live in. There is some mistrust with the UCC local offices. To bring all those people back in to believe in the UCC beliefs, we need to restore connection with the broader denomination. This needs to happen.
- The time commitment might be a problem. It would be hard for some on council to do that.
- Due to Covid, are we in a place to move forward yet with this type of program?
- We need to remember the youth and try to retain youth as members. St. Lucas is having a hard time retaining youth members in town.
- We need to re-establish multi-generational families who will call St. Lucas their home church.

CONSENT AGENDA – Paul said there were 10 items in the Consent Agenda. Marty made a motion to adopt the Consent Agenda and Dave seconded. Paul asked if there were any objections and there were none. The Consent Agenda was adopted.

- Membership & Evangelism February 2021 Minutes
- Membership & Evangelism March 2021 Minutes
- February 2021 Preschool Board Minutes
- February 2021 Building & Grounds Minutes
- March 2021 Building & Grounds Minutes
- General Fund Regular Offering Graphs
- Finance Committee March 2021 Minutes
- Cemetery Board January 2021 Minutes
- Cemetery Board February 2021 Minutes
- Council Conversation Notes

APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 2021 MINUTES - Paul said he did not put the minutes in the Consent Agenda because there was a lot of discussion about the wording. Dave made a motion and Jack seconded. Discussion followed. Jack noticed one small change under the paycheck protection loan #2. The minutes said we were 14% down in our giving. It should be 22%. Joy mentioned not putting in quite so much detail, and make the minutes a little more general. Dave asked if Joy was objecting to how it was written up or what was said? Debbie said she made Vicki’s changes. Joy is okay with that and with the minutes. Minutes approved.

STAFF REPORTS – Pastor Vicki – Vicki said that she had three funerals this month with another one coming up on Friday - the first one in the sanctuary since Covid. She is getting ready for Easter, with planning done for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Vicki and Seth are in touch with the Raddick’s for the Easter 8:00 a.m. service. She has made several pastoral care calls as she’s heard of people in the hospital or members who are ill and through the Caring Ministry calling list. Vicki is working with Dan and Amy to plan Confirmation on April 25th. There is a baptism scheduled for May 23rd - Ian Mueller, son of Brian and Laura Mueller. Vicki is planning vacation for September, 10 - 20. She is also fielding questions about the Denny Road sign, live streaming, reviewing AV equipment needs and other general administrative issues. Jack asked if she has been able to take any time off during the week and have a good balance between life and St. Lucas. Vicki said she will take a little time after the week of Easter. Coming in during Lent, she was expecting to not have a regular day off.

OLD BUSINESS

- **June Schmitt Property** – Joy said most of the furniture is moved out of the house. Some is going to the family in the parsonage and Lindbergh CARES has been contacted too. Joy will get with Dave and let him look at the home for real estate purposes.
- **Electronic Meeting Procedures** – Debbie said that she and Joy met today and started the process, using the documents Paul gave them. They will meet again next week.
- **Sexton House Rental** – Paul mentioned using DECA as the property manager and he has an agreement from DECA. Karl Grattendick from B&G called Paul and said he is opposed to using DECA. Dave said he has had a 20 year good experience with DECA both good and bad but isn't aware of the church property problems with DECA. He has found they are a good company and he recommends them. Karl wants to come address the council. Vicki asked if we review the contract on an annual basis and she was told that in the past it was our Business Manager who handled this.

Marty made the following motion and Dave seconded it:

The motion approved at the February 23 Council Meeting appointing DECA Realty as the Property Manager for 11825 Denny Road is rescinded and it is hereby moved that the Buildings & Grounds Committee investigate alternative property managers for this property.

Motion carried.

Paul said there is one other issue regarding a handyman who is doing work around the sexton house and needs a place to stay. Council said this would not be a good idea and Paul will notify Karl. There was further discussion about having a stranger working on the property. Gregg will talk to B&G about undocumented contractors on St. Lucas properties.

- **Roof Repair/Cool, Safe and Dry Funds** – Don said the Cool, Safe & Dry campaign is settled. He will draft some words reporting details out to the congregation before the Congregational Meeting. Paul and Jack have a copy of the details and it will be published in the eblast hopefully this week.
- **Paycheck Protection Program Loan #2** – Jack said that the application has been submitted to the bank and they approved it. It's on its way to the SBA for approval. We are waiting to hear.
- **Member Departure Protocol** – Paul said Membership & Evangelism has been addressing member departure protocol. Vicki wants to come up with some procedures on when people leave the congregation. Juanita said she would follow up with people who want to withdraw their membership. Debbie asked how is Council notified when someone leaves the church? Vicki said Membership & Evangelism is continuing to discuss this. People don't often tell when they are just looking for a new church and they don't always tell St. Lucas they are transferring their membership. Juanita will send us a copy of a letter she received from a member who is leaving. Margie and Tim Kohl are leaving too and met with Vicki.
- **In-Person Worship** – Marty's mother will be the first funeral this week in-person and starting Easter Sunday we will have in-person worship and from then on with the same protocols. Joy said she talked with Michele Ottinger and the Sunday School families are anxious to get back

into Sunday School. Marty said the children should be able to meet in the Social Hall. Vicki asked about masks for children. Marty explained the task force's history and position on mask rules regarding children. Don asked Marty to let him know how the first funeral service goes. Marty said temperature taking is a reminder of protocol but we need to move forward with maybe some signage to remind people of protocols for people that attend events inside.

- **Other Old Business** - None

NEW BUSINESS

- **Semi-Annual Meeting Date** – Paul asked when we should have the meeting in May since the usual date would be the same as Mother's Day? Marty said a Sunday is good and a combination in-person and electronic meeting is good. The more people we have involved the better. The Semi-Annual Meeting Date is set for May 16.
- **Parsonage Rental Rate** – Debbie Heagle got an email from DECA saying the lease on the parsonage expires at the end of April. Do we want to rent for the same rate again? Is anyone from the congregation still subsidizing the rent for the parsonage? Donovan would know more details. Debbie asked what the financial situation is now with the family and could Donovan give us more insight as to what the family needs.
- **Interim Associate Minister Search** – Vicki hasn't heard back from Damien so she'll follow up with him soon. Paul and Vicki will go ahead and do it themselves since interest was slim from Council members to be on this committee.
- **Denny Road Sign** – Karl Grattendick can research sign companies.

Jack made a motion and Marsha seconded it:

Building & Grounds will be instructed to look into a digital sign for Denny Road.

Dave will send Karl information from a company he has used in the past. Motion carried.

- **Cemetery Board Price Increase Request** – Cemetery Board has asked for an increase in rates effective March 1, 2021. They are asking for Council approval.

Dave made the following motion and Joy seconded:

Approve Cemetery Board's request to increase rates effective March 1, 2021.

Motion carried.

- **Memorial Fund Expenditure Request** – Memorial Committee was asked by the AV Committee to purchase AV equipment from the Memorial Fund at a cost of approximately \$3,500.

Don made the following motion and Juanita seconded it:

Approve the Memorial Committee's request to purchase AV equipment at a cost of approximately \$3,500.

Motion carried.

- **Other New Business** – Vicki asked about church service times after Easter. Will there just be one service at 9:00 going forward? Paul said we're taking baby steps and starting with one service going forward. Joy said we might have some push back from the 11:00 and Sunday night

groups. Dave said we only have one pastor and it's a burden to do all the different services. Debbie suggested that we re-visit this next month after we see what the "after-Easter" attendance numbers look like.

ADJOURNMENT WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER – Dave made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Marty seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m. with Vicki leading us out with the Lord's Prayer.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- March 28 – Palm Sunday
- April 1 – Maundy Thursday
- April 2 – Good Friday
- April 3 – 10:00 – Easter Egg Hunt
- April 4 – 8:00 – Easter Sunrise Service
- April 4 – 9:30 & 11:30 – Easter Worship
- April 27 – 6:00 – Council Meeting

*Respectfully submitted,
Debbie Ball
St. Lucas Council Secretary*