

**SAINT LUCAS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**September 25, 2023, 6:00 pm - Zoom Hybrid/Room 19**

*(\*This meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by President, Marty Schmidt.)*

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

**STAFF PRESENT:** Rev. Dr. Carole Barner & Rev. Vicki Hampton/Zoom

**VISITORS PRESENT:** Dan Herron

**ZOOM VISITORS PRESENT:** Sandy Harris & Ellen Littleton | Two visitors.

**OPENING PRAYER:** The meeting was opened with a prayer by Juanita Wagner.

**GUEST COMMENTS:** There were none.

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

- A.V. Ministry - September 6, 2023 Minutes
- Cemetery Board - July 19, 2023 & August 23, 2023 Minutes
- Council Meeting - August 28, 2023, Minutes
- Finance Ministry - August 15, 2023, Minutes
- Finance Ministry - September 11, 2023 - Special Meeting Minutes
- Preschool Board Meeting - September 12, 2023, Minutes
  - *Juanita advised the Preschool Board would like the Council to know that families of the Preschool are also now participating with contributions to the Little Free Pantry.*
- Stewardship Ministry - June 28, 2023, & August 23, 2023 Minutes

Barbara moved and Donovan seconded the September 25, 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. She also advised that she is still ill with CoVid and she will hang on via Zoom, but most likely will not stay for this entire meeting.

**Pastor Carole** -

- Pastor Carole advised that within the past month, both she and Katy Forand have had to speak with the same group of older students who had climbed the locked gate to play on the Preschool playground equipment a number of times.
- Pastor Carole advised that another student has joined confirmation for a total of ten. She has combined the 7th & 8th graders for this year's class. All reside in different school districts so relationship-building will be important.
- Five new members will be welcomed into St. Lucas UCC on Saturday, September 30th.
- It is a busy time with the last Community Meal scheduled for Sunday, October 1st.
- Gratitude Luncheon (formerly known as the Senior's Luncheon) will take place on October 4th.
- The "Tail"-gate Blessing will occur on October 8th, all are welcome!

Violet asked if Pastor Carole will be attending the Confirmation retreat at Camp Moval this upcoming weekend. She replied Yes. Violet asked as she too would be there manning the Ropes Course. There were no other questions for Carole at this point.

### **FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Paul Simons advised the following information for August 2023:

- General Fund Cash was \$655,617 on August 31, 2023, versus \$516,758 as of August 31, 2022. These balances included Money Market funds of \$408,298 in 2023 and \$519,840 in 2022.
- Regular Offerings for the month of August were under budget by \$4,600. Year-to-date Regular Offerings are \$14,000 under budget but are \$46,000 over August 2022. Miscellaneous General Income for August reflects the reclassification of \$41,000 of the insurance check received in July. This 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.
- August General Fund Expenses were under our anticipated budget by \$16,000. This variance was primarily caused by the absence of custodial and Music Director wages and the reclassification of insurance proceeds, which were partly offset by plumbing repairs, outside janitorial services, and the payment of the quarterly insurance premium, budgeted for October. Year-to-date, General Fund Expenses were over budget by \$28,000, 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 an August General Fund deficit of \$52,038 but a year-to-date excess of \$48,859, caused by the variations discussed above. The Net Deficit for August was \$50,761, while the year-to-date excess was \$25,503, compared to an August budgeted deficit of \$26,431 and a year-to-date budgeted deficit of \$166,661. The August unfavorable variance principally reflects the extra building maintenance expenses and the insurance payment. Year-to-date, the favorable Net Deficit variance reflects the Shirley Pfister and ERC monies received, coupled with the absence of Search Committee Expenses, which were partly offset by various facility repairs discussed above.

Donovan questioned the plumbing bill of \$16,000 posted in August. He was aware of plumbing work performed last Spring but was wondering if this was a new expense. Paul advised it was for stack work. Donovan was wondering why it was received so late. The conversation continued about plumbing vendors submitting their invoices in a non-timely manner and to the correct people at church.

Paul also advised a new August expense not planned for during last year's budget process is the janitorial service we are now contracting with. That will continue through the end of the year. In addition, the quarterly insurance package payment scheduled for October (approximately \$10,500) was paid in August (two months early) as the church has been having difficulty with timely interaction from Enterprise Bank. However, this will be the final payment for that vendor in 2023.

Phil asked what the net amount of the ERC money was after the Preschool received its portion. Paul answered approximately \$204K.

Marty shared that the church recently received the insurance payment from our claim due to the lightning strike damage last February. He reported we came out "about \$500 ahead". Paul added we received \$46K. Jeff has

reallocated \$40K as he is waiting for the actual vendor -final- invoices before he allocates the remaining \$6K to the expense accounts that were used for payments of parts/repair earlier this year.

Note - The 2024 Budget will be discussed later this evening during the Executive Council Session.

### **Physical Facilities Ministries:**

Donovan presented the following information to the Council -

- Donovan has received bids from John LaFrance Carpet Cleaning Service who does the carpet cleaning in the preschool. Bids are for the sanctuary, stairs, carpeting near the office, and elevators. Final results may determine a possible need to pursue hard surfaces in those areas.
- Four trespass signs have been ordered and will be positioned near the Athletic Fields. Donovan shared there is a family who lives west of the fields and would like the opportunity to have his kids play there. A *lengthy* discussion continued about the church's liability in the event an injury is incurred on our private property by his family.
- Donovan is pursuing a roofing bid from Glandt Roofing for the leaks. He will be meeting with them on Monday.
- Donovan and Violet shared information about seeding and aerating. The bid from MS Lawncare is \$6,300. The bid from Kyle Landscaping is \$7,200. This will not be an annual expense. They don't yet have an idea of how it will impact Lindbergh Schools usage. It's a gamble as to whether it will increase their need/time for our fields. With that in mind, does the Council want to spend that money for potentially more income for field rental? The response was yes.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

>Constitution and Bylaws - Marty shared that under Forfeiture of Membership on page ten of the Bylaws, he has added the text "excluding fees for specific programs", after financial support to the operations of the church to cover The Victory Garden, the cemetery, or other program fees.

Under Responsibilities of the Council, an expense that exceeded 1% of the budget (i.e. to call a congregational meeting), has now been changed to 5% (i.e. \$40-50K) against the budget.

The committee changed he/she to "they". The committee eliminated the Board of Christian Education. No changes were made to the Cemetery Board. The Preschool Board number was changed from nine to seven per their request.

Part 10 changed the Cabinet to the Ministry Coordination Team. In an effort to get that going again since coming out of COVID, they are identifying who will be a part of that team and also changing the number of meetings each year to twice, rather than quarterly. Marty did discuss this with Michele O. She would like to get this up and running again. However, she also recognizes that until we get our settled pastor in place it may not occur for some time. However, with this wording in place, it will be ready to go once we get to that stage.

Under Endowments, the investment policy parameters will be made by the Council. The implementation of that policy will be made by the stewards and they have the leeway to use a manager if they so choose.

The change to the Perpetual Endowment Trust will limit trustees to one five-year term with a two-year gap -rather than none as is current- between a new five-year term of a returning trustee. Paul added this language will need to be added to the trust as well.

Also, Phil suggested, an addition to CLAUSE SIX which states “the trust may be amended by the congregation periodically as permitted under the law and as permitted in clause six of the P.E.T.” (Per Marty, clause six states specifically which clauses can and cannot be amended in the P.E.T.)

Phil asked what is the rationale for the General Endowment trustees being comprised of two members from the Perpetual Endowment Fund. Marty assumes it was because they were “all there at the same time for a meeting and it required fewer people”. Paul advised the General Endowment trustees were able to draw on the experience/knowledge of the P.E.T. trustees.

Phil suggests not having P.E.T. trustees on the General Endowment committee. He feels it should be comprised of the Council members and lay people only. Whereas, all the members of P.E.T. should remain lay members of the congregation. He described it as putting “all of your eggs in one basket”. Marty understood the analogy and agreed. Marty continued that the Nominating Committee should now be 3-5 members.

Marty’s intention is to have all of this typed up with an explanation of each change to be available for the entire congregation to read a month prior to the annual meeting. Paul suggested there should be a Council Conversation made available to the congregation in order to digest the information.

Marty added that if this passes, we will go from twelve members to nine Council members starting in 2024. However, if it does not pass, we need to keep in mind that five people are going off of Council in 2023 in addition to Jenny Bell’s sixth slot we’ve had open all year.

FYI - Marty is running for re-election. Marsha Fey has offered to stay on for one more year to cover the remainder of Julie Burr’s term. This means there is only one spot for election and Wanda Gilman has agreed to run for that. However, we’ll need to be prepared to fill all those open slots if the new language in the Bylaws does not pass.

Therefore Marty asked if some of the people going off on 12/31/23 would be prepared to stay on until the semi-annual meeting so there would be more time to fill the empty spots. Pastor Vicki cautioned against this. Paul agreed. It could be construed as “sneaky” or pre-arranged by not using the proper nomination methods stipulated for Council members prior to the annual meeting. Marty advised he’s not trying to be sneaky, he’s attempting to find a solution. Vicki advised that if the Bylaws language doesn’t pass, then you can take nominations that day from the floor at the annual meeting. Marty then asked if the same process could be followed for the delegates that need to be voted on. Vicki’s answer was yes.

>Endowments - Part of this discussion will be done during the upcoming Executive Session tonight. However, two documents to be discussed now are the ones regarding the investment policies. The guidelines for the General Endowment and the Beyersdorfer Funds are developed by the Council. They were previously invested to reasonably expect a 6% return to payout to the church every year. It doesn’t specify what the mix should be nor updated any specific endowment policies. Marty has spelled out the ratio to be 70/30 and no higher than that. The draw would be 4% of the average balance over the last 12 quarters, i.e. the average of the 12 quarter-ends balance of the portfolio, take the average, and then apply the 4%. The 12 quarters being used for this calculation would end in September 2022.

Paul asked when you refer to cost basis under number six are you referring to an expense ratio. Marty answered yes. Then he asked Paul if that’s how he should refer to it. Paul replied that is how he has always known it to be. Marty clarified the expense costs associated with index funds. Donovan asked if that is what we’ll specify as part of the policy, not over 0.05%, correct? Marty answered yes.

Katy asked if we have talked with other brokerages, as that 0.05% seems a little low. Marty stated that investing in indexed funds is going to give you almost the same outcome as trying to micromanage everything over the years at far less expense. And that's where we need to start steering this money instead of paying a lot for not necessarily a better return on the investment. Donovan added. We need to be clear that we're not stating we're losing money. What we'd like to do is tighten up the "guardrails" for the fund. Marty asked if he could have a motion to adopt these new guidelines. Donovan made the motion. Kathy seconded it. Everyone approved the motion.

>Open & Affirming Update - No new updates. Barbara asked Pastor Vicki when we should plan on commissioning the task force. Do we need to wait for the final, second youth member? Pastor Vicki answered no. The two will meet to look at the church calendar for a future date.

>Accounting Software Update - Paul shared that Jeff Wagener, Debbie Heagle, and Sue Simmons had a Zoom meeting with the REALM rep. Sue was pleased to hear about the personnel side. Two apps will be available. One for the congregation and one for the Pastors to use. The accounting side seems to be what will be good for the office. The only thing left to do is for the committee to meet to finalize who they want to go with.

>Land Use Task Force - At the last meeting, Marty advised he was going to be talking with Miller & Neff, the real estate appraisers. Due to other obligations, he was not able to schedule that meeting. However, Pat Stephens has requested Marty's presence at their next Preschool Board meeting on October 10th to discuss the potential of a new preschool building.

>Bridge Minister - Marty spoke with Rev. Damien Lake about our plans moving forward. Pastor Carole will be leaving on October 15th. Pastor Vicki will most likely be gone between the end of the year and Easter and our Search Team is still working hard to find a settled senior minister for St. Lucas UCC. Rev. Lake told Marty it is unlikely we will have anyone in place by the end of the year. However, one person did come to mind for him and he told Marty he would check into it and get back to us. He has yet to hear from Rev. Lake. But once he does he will update the Council. There is a plan in place for Saturday night services and for confirmation. Kathy asked what the plan is for the confirmands. Pastor Carole answered that both Amy and Lynn have worked with her for the past two years. She has given them a detailed syllabus with needed resources for the coursework. Pastor Vicki will be working with the students on Wednesday evening, but due to Sunday services, Amy and Lynn will provide the Sunday morning coverage for them. It was also offered that the Saturday night services will be covered with a video sermon and lay people to cover scripture, offering, etc. just like when Pastor Vicki was ill last Sunday with CoVid.

At this time Marty raised the question about what will happen if we get into next spring and we still haven't yet called a settled senior pastor and then have two pastoral openings since that is what the congregation desires. In this scenario he wants us to think about a possible Bridge minister and the second person being someone else who is not ordained. Either a student minister or a person trained as a Christian Education leader. Another consideration regarding a Director of Christian Education is they are less expensive than an ordained minister. We would not be paying into the pension fund, there would not be a housing allowance like we typically pay for a minister. Pastor Vicki advised we really need to be concerned with comparing budget line items before we discuss what we'll be dealing with. For example, an employee working 20+ hours a week is getting a 6% pension benefit versus a minister getting approximately 14.3% benefit into the pension fund. When you're speaking of a housing allowance, that is part of the overall compensation plan with a call agreement. So we really have to be able to compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges. Marty's main point is to get the topic out there to avoid surprises.

>Choral Area Changes - This topic is a continuation of Vicki's staff report from August. Marty has spoken with Stephen Jones. Our needs are still 1.) being good stewards of the piano and 2.) the quality of choral presentation during church services. However, the idea we are now considering is to remove all of the pews in the choir loft and replace them with chairs for the choir to sit in. There are three levels in the choir loft from the back wall. By removing the back two -highest- levels in the choir loft, you are left with an area that is level with the Chancel. We could then move the piano laterally to that new open area, away from the vents. The hope is to be able to reconfigure that choir loft space into a level floor space that will hold risers for the choir, and the piano, in addition to space for instruments of potential visiting choirs. The end result would be two levels including the organ area. This is not a decision for tonight, Marty just wanted us to be aware of the current thought process. In addition, Marty has spoken with Barb Beck on the Memorial Committee regarding funding. At this moment if we make a request from them, we are now third in line for consideration. So for budgeting purposes, it would either be a Memorial Fund or a "music angel" could assist. Marty feels this would be much less disruptive to the aesthetics of the church.

>Other Old Business - None.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

>Cabinet Meetings - This was discussed above under the Constitution/ByLaws areas.

>Other New Business -

- Ecumenical Partnerships for Mission - Our Back Pack Program has doubled from 37 last year every other week. However, this year it's now up to a head count of 69. Southminster Presbyterian is helping us with snacks this year. Robin Sobo and Katy Forand are still underwriting this mission "for now". Moving forward Katy feels they have about one dozen people in our congregation as volunteers when needed. With the Community Meal going on hiatus, Robin and Katy will be talking with those ladies. Plus Meals on Wheels may be able to assist. Marty's point is if we should have problems filling those needs, we could partner with other churches in the immediate Lindbergh Schools area to make it a joint community venture. Marty also thinks perhaps Mission and Outreach needs to be tapped for assistance.

The Council said thank you and good night to the Visitors on Zoom. Marty closed the Zoom session so the Council could go into a confidential/executive session.

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

*(Minute marker: 1 hour / 36 minutes)*

Respectfully submitted,  
Barbara Smith,  
Recording Secretary