

SAINT LUCAS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
December 18, 2023, 12:00 pm - Friendship Village | Cambridge Dining Room

*(*This meeting was called to order at 12:02 pm by President, Marty Schmidt.)*

MEMBERS PRESENT: Violet Brooks, Marsha Fey, Katy Forand, Kathy Herron, Donovan Larson, Jack Laudenslager, Marty Schmidt, Paul Simons, Barbara Smith, and Juanita Wagner | Ten members. *(Absent Council Member - Phil Denton)*

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT: Rev. Vicki Hampton & Rev. Merrimon Boyd

VISITOR PRESENT: Wanda Gillman, incoming 2024 Council member - Note: ZOOM was not used today

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

GUEST COMMENTS: None.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- A.V. Ministry - November 1, 2023 Minutes
- Cemetery Board Meeting - October 18, 2023
- Council Meeting - November 27, 2023, Minutes
- Council Meeting, Executive Session - November 27, 2023, Minutes
- Finance Ministry - November 21, 2023, Minutes

Barbara moved to accept and Donovan seconded that the December 18, 2023 Consent Agenda be received as submitted. The motion was accepted unanimously by a show of hands.

STAFF REPORTS:

Pastor Vicki - Pastor Vicki took the opportunity to verbally elaborate on what she shared with the Council.

(1.) She asked for assistance with communion volunteers for the 7 pm and 9 pm Christmas Eve services. In addition, she asked for a candle volunteer to work the 7 pm & 9 pm Christmas services. She was able to count on many from the Council to fill some of the slots. She will send an all-call email for the gaps on her list. (2.) She wanted to discuss the purchasing of New Century hymnals from Cokesbury for the sanctuary. The benefit of this type of purchase is that we will no longer need to insert photocopies of Sunday hymns into the bulletins each week, not to mention our current hymnals are very out of date. This hymnal contains a more modern language and would be a positive indication to any future settled Sr. minister that St. Lucas UCC is interested in keeping up with the times. Depending upon where they are ordered from, a single hymnal can run \$18-\$20/each. The Council agreed with her assessment. The Stewardship Ministry will be approached to determine how this can be fulfilled. And, (3.) Pastor Vicki feels the need to offer thanks and recognition for the above-and-beyond work Michele and Amy Rustige provided to St. Lucas UCC which resulted in the December production of Live with Zak & Lizzy. It was well attended. It showed our church in a wonderful light and it was a positive reflection of St. Lucas UCC. Council discussion continued on how to best honor their work. The final consensus of this discussion was to purchase gift certificates to Roberto's Restaurant for Michele & Randy and Amy & Adam. Pastor Vicki will secure the gift cards, and Barbara Smith will gift wrap them in time for Christmas. Further discussion of two personnel matters will take place in the executive session.

Pastor Merrimon - Pastor Merrimon asked if there were any questions from the Council upon review of his report. Donovan asked if he was settling in okay. Pastor Merrimon replied yes. He has been kept very busy.

“It’s the most work I’ve done in one month in any church I’ve been with.” He’s found the staff and congregation to be friendly, welcoming, and helpful whenever he needs assistance. He’s thrilled to be with us.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Paul Simons advised the following information for November 2023 -

- General Fund Cash was \$621,391 at November 30, 2023, versus \$549,936 as of November 30, 2022. These balances included Money Market funds of \$427,202 in 2023 and \$426,920 in 2022.
- Regular Offerings for the month of November were under budget by \$31,000. Year-to-date Regular Offerings are \$34,000 under budget but are \$34,000 over 2022. Miscellaneous General Income for November was over budget due to the receipt of a \$20,000 gift from the Preschool and Loaves and Fishes receipts of \$5,000. 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.
- November General Fund Expenses were only slightly (\$1,300) over our anticipated budget. This variance primarily reflects increased lawn maintenance and building maintenance expenditures, partly offset by Pastor Merrimon’s lower part-time salary. Year-to-date, General Fund Expenses were over budget by \$18,000, 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 and the departure of Pastor Carole.
- This all resulted in a November General Fund deficit of \$1,400 but a year-to-date excess of \$13,382, caused by the variations discussed above. The Net Excess for November was \$3,487, which approximated the budgeted excess of \$4,882. Year-to-date, there was a deficit of \$27,253, compared to a year-to-date budgeted deficit of \$189,215. This favorable Net Deficit variance reflects the Shirley Pfister and ERC monies received coupled with the absence of Search Committee expenditures, partly offset by the absence of the Shirley Beyersdorfer income and various increased facility repairs discussed above.

Paul asked for questions. Pastor Vicki added information she was aware of regarding the Loaves & Fishes account. She shared that approximately \$11K was recently donated to St. Lucas UCC. \$1K was received from Southminster Presbyterian to help fund our Back Pack Program. And due to Carol Stelmach’s due diligence, St. Lucas received \$10K from the Meals on Wheels grant. Paul then advised an additional \$4K was received from Sugarbaker’s in St. Louis due to St. Lucas UCC member Connie Moore’s association with that not-for-profit organization. The Council was pleased and thankful for the work of these members on behalf of St. Lucas UCC. Barbara Smith then asked what can be expected from the Shirley Beyersdorfer fund in 2024 since the balance is now over \$200K. Paul replied as long as the market continues to stay good, the set fee St. Lucas UCC can expect to receive \$15K in 2024.

Physical Facilities Ministries:

Donovan presented the following information to the Council -

- Donovan summarized what was discussed in the Special Council meeting on 12/3/23 and the reasons Glandt Roofing company has been selected for our roof project. Their work will commence in the Spring as his work orders are approximately 3-4 months out for our wait time.

- As Donovan explained last month, we've received two bids for sealing the main church parking lot. The bids were very close in price yet he accepted the bid from Emeier Construction who will be doing more work such as a second coat of paving and also the restriping of the pavement when the repaving is complete. He expects their bill to be approximately \$20K. That work will commence in the Spring as temperatures above 50f are needed.
- Donovan shared that Jeff has contacted our lawn care service with his concern about the Fall clean-up work not being completed. When the contract was accepted last Spring, there was discussion of who would perform the clean-up; our volunteers or their crew. MS Lawn Care has now completed that clean-up work for the church, 11815 (Parsonage), and 11825 (Sexton's house). In the Spring, their one-year contract will expire. Donovan plans to send requests for bids to ensure MS continues to be the best choice for us.
- Pastor Carole recently requested gutter cleaning at 11825/Sexton's house. After Donovan's inspection, he realized the multiple Cypress trees there are causing the clutter and heavy weight on those gutters. That cleaning is being completed today and the gutters are being modified for better drainage of the needle-like leaves from the Cypress trees.
- The manger/creche displayed in front of the church was found by Charlie and has now been set up. *(The structure will need repair work after this season.)* Bob Beck has volunteered to do outside electrical work before next year to make the lighting of the creche brighter.
- Donovan will also be working with Violet to help with decisions about the ball fields in 2024. His main concern is making sure the rental groups have appropriate and current insurance documentation on file with St. Lucas UCC. In addition, there will be discussions with Lindbergh Schools regarding the potential of increased 2024 fees after our improved 2023 maintenance.
 - Field work also prompted discussion about the future removal of overgrowth between trees along the northern and eastern fence line of fields. This will allow us to reclaim the ground that we own while also granting more field space. Plus it will provide a more definitive property line between St. Lucas UCC and our neighbors.

There were no questions for Donovan after his report.

OLD BUSINESS:

>Open & Affirming Task Force - Barbara Smith advised nothing to share. Their next meeting is January 2nd.

>Accounting Software Update - Paul advised the conversion and training are still scheduled for next month.

>Land Use Task Force - Marty has nothing new to report from this group.

>Choral Area Changes - Marty shared that the Council will discuss a 1, 3, and 5-year plan at next year's Council Retreat regarding the work needed in the choir loft. He feels the Chancel reconfiguration will probably fall into a 1-3 year plan. However, he feels the choir loft is the most immediate concern because of the \$30K+ piano that has constant exposure to air vent changes. He doesn't feel an architect is currently needed to tell us what to do. So he's looking to the Council for guidance. Barbara asked if the piano could be moved forward, closer to the stairs, thus allowing the director to have a clear view of the pianist without pillar obstruction. Donovan suggested blocking the 4' long vents on the floor where the piano sits. In his opinion, it may slightly affect the temperature where the organ pipes are housed. Yet, the comfort level of the sanctuary will not change. Merrimon asked what the cost would be to remove the large pulpit on the right side of the chancel. *(He prefers being closer to the congregation on the floor and chooses not to use it.)* If it could be removed it may allow another space needed for the piano. Marty answered by stating he'd need to measure to see if that's a

possibility. However, both he and Donovan agree that covering the vents is the least invasive and immediate action. They both feel we should be able to determine quickly how helpful it will be. Pastor Vicki agreed. She shared that another option from the music directors' perspective would be to remove the first two rows of pews below the lectern. The piano could then use that space. A comment was made that removing two pews is much less expensive than removing an entire pulpit. A brief discussion continued about the need for the piano to have stable humidity to avoid having the wood dry out. More discussion on this topic will take place during the retreat.

>Fellowship Hall Use Policy - Marty asked if anyone has any comments or concerns about the current draft of the new proposed Hall Use policy. Jack had a concern about item six - the right to cancel an event due to conflict. Marty and Vicki stated the addition of a clause regarding possible afternoon activities (i.e. funeral luncheons) would be beneficial to help explain item six. Kathy asked about the consequences for a group that does not adhere to the policy list when using the Social Hall. Marty stated we don't rent to that group again. Violet suggested adding a deposit statement. In that event, if the hall is not left in good condition as required, their refund is not returned. Marty will add a statement regarding a \$100 deposit. The fees quoted in the document are based on his experience with his prior rentals of Christ Memorial's room space. In addition, he has shown this draft to Debbie and Charlie and both felt comfortable with the content shown. Also, Jeff has checked with our cleaning contractor and was told they need a two-week advance notice of an event. Their fee for working an event is \$35/hour. After today's comments, Marty will have the updated document available for 1/1/24 publication.

>PET Trustees - This topic was an item of discussion at a recent Financial Committee meeting. Marty shared that Noel Knobloch, one of the PET Trustees has one more year left of his 5-year term which will end on 12/31/24. Noel has been in poor health this past year which has prevented him from attending, participating, or providing input for any PET business in 2023. Pastor Vicki has reached out to him to offer pastoral care. She has not heard back from him or his family. Marty has not been able to reach him by phone. So the concern becomes having a skeletal PET crew to perform the Council assignment. He feels this is not fair to others. Marty reached out to Don Lang who is a friend of Noel's. Don has not spoken directly with Noel, but this is what he shared with Marty; Noel is in declining health with serious medical issues. He incurred a severe infection after receiving knee surgery which resulted in a longer-than-expected in-patient hospitalization. He was discharged to home two weeks ago and the decision has been made to not pursue any further medical intervention for him. However, Don did share the phone number of Noel's wife with Marty for his and Pastor Vicki's use. In light of his current circumstance, Marty is asking the Council to table this topic from further action until an update can be secured, hopefully before next month's Council meeting. All in attendance agreed this was a reasonable decision.

NEW BUSINESS:

>Bridge Senior Minister - As Pastor Vicki has given St. Lucas UCC her official notice of resignation -her last day will be Sunday, April 14- Marty has contacted Rev. Damien Lake, Associate Conference Minister for the Missouri Mid-South Conference to advise him of our need for a Sr. Bridge minister effective 4/15/24.

>Offering Collection - Discussion about passing the offering plates has recently come up in the Financial Ministry meeting. Since hosting the large crowd at the Live with Zak & Lizzy production, a discussion by the Council is also warranted. Violet offered that when the plate is passed it offers a reminder to other St. Lucas UCC members that a contribution to the church is important. Paul reminded the group that currently we do not have full usher teams to handle the passing of the plate. Donovan asked whether VENMO is working for us. Is it granting the increase in giving that we hoped for? Kathy reminded the group that people also contribute

online which is not seen on any Sunday. Marty asked what if we had two individuals standing at the back of the sanctuary after church, they could hold an offering plate for people to contribute in the event they had missed their earlier chance. Katy added that it could be the two Council members who have signed up to collect the offering that day. A brief conversation continued to discuss the merits of all the viewpoints shared. To summarize, Marty suggested we attempt having two people available after the benediction as a test to determine if there is any improvement.

>Shed Usage - Since recently searching for the creche and looking around the shed, Marty asked if we as a Council should be aware of the activity in the shed. For example who has a key to the shed, who has access to the shed, how it is used, etc. As the chair of the Cemetery Board for six years, Donovan shared his experience with shed activity. Marty also asked about the Dart Ball played in the shed. Does alcohol consumption occur there? Paul reminded the group that Dart Ball games were moved to the shed when the Social Hall was off-limits due to the installation of new flooring. As someone who has been involved with Dart Ball, Jack shared his experience of what occurs during the practice and play of Dart Ball. The conversation continued about whether a policy concerning shed activity needs to be created. Continued discussion determined that the current practice of the shed does not need to be addressed. Leaving activities in the shed unchanged is acceptable for now.

>Other New Business - None

At this time, Marty and the Council THANKED retiring Council members Jack Laudenslager, Paul Simons, and Juanita Wagner. The Council then prepared to move into the executive session of this meeting.

In closing, Juanita asked the Council to consider offering a Bible study for the benefit of the St. Lucas UCC population at Friendship Village. A brief conversation of how this could be achieved was completed. Marty will add this item to the list of 2024 Council considerations.

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

(Minute marker: 1 hour / 30 minutes)

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Smith,
Recording Secretary