

COUNCIL CONVERSATION - Sunday, Sept 24, 2023 - 10:45 am - 11:38 am - Room 19

0 pastors, 8 council members, 11 visitors, and 2 online visitors, for a total of 21 participants.

**Note - A conversation regarding a Bridge minister was underway when I walked in*

Marty Schmidt explained to the group his goals for tomorrow night's Council meeting:

1. A plan for a Bridge/Supply pastor once Pastor Carole leaves on October 15th.
2. Further discussion of the church's endowments and PET/trust.
3. Review of the most recent proposed updates to the Bylaws & Constitution revision draft. His goal, if acceptable to the Council tomorrow night, is to have a final draft available for the congregation to review very soon in preparation for a vote at the annual meeting on November 12th.

With those goals explained, questions/comments were shared within the meeting:

- Paul Litzsinger asked if any of the changes in the Bylaws/Constitution included any type of age limitation.
 - Marty answered No.
- Joan Dalgaard asked if there will be any changes to the committees (ministries) to the number of members each will allow.
 - Marty answered no
- Marty noted there will be three ministries within the church that will now have a chair/leader who sits on the church Council. For the reason that they are the most financially involved ministries within the church budget. Those ministries are (1.) Finance, (2.) Personnel, and (3.) Physical Facilities (formerly Building and Grounds). This will also provide a better path for communication between those ministries and the Council. However, there is new language encouraging committees (ministries) to change leadership every few years. This is not to say that a person needs to step off the committee/ministry, as there is value in having long-term members on a committee/ministry. But language encouraging this is an attempt to keep a committee/ministry from becoming "stagnant".
- Ellen Littleton asked about younger people working in a ministry. For example, a Jr. Council member could be beneficial. If they get involved it may bring younger people back into the church.
 - Marty commended Ellen for an interesting perspective. That thought had not come up. He continued by saying the Council is making an intentional effort to get a pair of high school students on the upcoming Open & Affirming Task Force. Plus there is language about our representation at the Association meetings and the Conference meetings to conform to their guidelines by sending youth participants. Thank you, Ellen.
- Phil Denton asked if the confirmed youth are voting members.
 - Marty's answer was Yes. But they are not allowed to run for Council (or be on PET). That age limit is 21 with prior membership in the church of no less than two years.
- Donovan Larson asked if anyone had any questions about the parsonage house... "because you should."
 - Dan Herron asked why we call it the parsonage when it (#11815) hasn't been a parsonage in over 20 years. (*"That's how it's 'always been' known."*)
- Marty asked what question should we have, Donovan.

- Donovan replied, “How much money is in the budget to maintain that house”? That is approximately \$5K, annually. Which is the same amount in the annual budget for the “sexton” house (#11825) which Pastor Carole rents. She will continue to stay in that house after she leaves St. Lucas UCC. Her St. Lucas UCC call agreement and her rental agreement were separate documents.
- Per Paul Simons and Donovan, the rent for #11815 is \$1,200/month. However, a house that size in the Lindbergh School District could easily afford a fee of \$2K+ each month. Donovan then gave a detailed explanation of how it technically should be viewed as a Mission project within St. Lucas UCC. Some St. Lucas members contacted Lindbergh Schools Social Worker about 7 years ago asking if they knew of any family in need of housing. Their answer was Yes. They were aware of a family in serious need that wanted to keep their children within the district. Prior to moving in, the house was in decent shape. But a family of ten has been living there for about six years. And like any of us, our houses take on wear and tear. Even more so if you have eight children in a four-bedroom home. Since they have lived there the church has replaced three toilets, one stove/oven (used in good condition), blinds, and one window. Mom works from home doing phone work. Dad was laid off during the pandemic but does work in part-time jobs.
 - Cynthia commented that she was on Council when this situation came up. And it was a miracle that Lindbergh was able to match our house with their family in need. The kid's ages are preschool to college-age and all do well in school.
 - Joan Larson added that Emmaus House had a family in that home after Pastor Clark. But after Emmaus House and a short private rental, it sat empty for some months before the Lindbergh family was identified.
 - Joan Dalgaard asked why couldn't we regard that house as one of our church missions like we do with Isaiah 58 or just like the Afghan family St. Lucas supports. *(Everyone seemed to appreciate that viewpoint.)*
 - Marty added that this is something the Financial Committee/Ministry looks at every month when they review the balance sheet/budget. Despite their financial situation, they have been good stewards of the property, in addition to being good stewards to their family. They are a two-parent household making sacrifices for their kids. This is their way to keep this family in a good school district. Marty feels the family is a valuable ministry. Katy Forand is supportive. Yet, she's wondering if there are goals and expectations that need to be met going forward.
 - This also allowed her to segue into the topic of Backpack meals for families in need in Lindbergh Schools. As an FYI - Katy shared that on Thursday, the Social Worker at Lindbergh advised an increase in the need for food for the food-insecure kids. Last school year the Backpack program filled 32 meals for kids every two weeks. This year that number has jumped to 69 -over two times- what they did last year.
 - Marty interjected that now is the perfect time for us to reach out to other churches within the Lindbergh School District to partner with us for this project. Katy has reached out to the Community Meal ladies for assistance. Since this information is still very new, the main Backpack Ladies (she, Carol Stelmach, and Robin Sobo) will be handling things for the immediate future until they finish drafting a firm plan to secure assistance. Katy's main point for bringing it to the attention of this group is to let everyone know the need is great! Marty advised that “this is the Holy Spirit saying ‘Now is the Time.’”
 - Paul Litzsinger asked if we should be communicating this info to the congregation in some way. As a general rule, we have a few people doing a lot of work. Yet, we don't seem to be doing a good job of informing the rest of the church what it needs. And

maybe we should make a point of deliberately talking about all of our mission programs.

- Karen Tylka was formerly in a church that made an arrangement like what we're talking about. The Church supplied the house and Lydia's House supplied the family and agreed to give assistance. Wanda Gillman added that in that situation there was a contracting company that took care of the maintenance on the house.
- Cynthia added that we would not be able to get market rate rent for this house in the condition it's in.
- Ellen was concerned about the importance of the family's privacy.
- Donovan understands that point, but we should get more assistance or volunteers within the congregation to help out with maintenance and upkeep.
- Joan Dalgaard asked in order to maintain the family's privacy, couldn't we lump their house into the Loaves & Fishes mission category?
- Marty agreed with Cynthia Rosfeld that we would not be able to get market-rate rent from it in the condition it is currently in. Yet, we shouldn't force a charitable family to have the indignity of living in a house that is not up to par. We really need to generate a long-term thought process for that property. If this is going to be a missional house, how do we make it stable? Unless we put some money into it soon, it will continue to go downhill. So what should be the plan for doing this?
- Barbara asked if a group of our own volunteers could go in and help out. Scrub, clean, patch, paint, etc. Marty asked what would keep the Dad from asking his own congregation to partner with us to help "shore up" their pastor's house.
- Phil is concerned there is no transition plan in place. Has the lease been reviewed? Are they expected to help with the maintenance of the home? Do they cut their own grass?
 - Cutting grass is part of the lawn care contract that we have with MS Lawncare since they also cut the yard at #11825.
- Donovan thanked everyone for the thoughtful discussion. It is what he was hoping to have happen by bringing up this topic. He didn't want anyone to think the family was taking advantage of us because they most certainly are not. As tenants, they ask for very little. He appreciates the good discussion we've had here today.
- Marty thanked everyone for attending and for sharing some great viewpoints and input.

Without any further comments/questions from the visitors, The Lord's Prayer was said to close this session.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Smith

Recording Secretary | St. Lucas UCC Church Council