

ST LUCAS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING - SEPTEMBER

9/28/2021

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Simons, Debbie Ball, Marsha Fey, Ken Hamilton, Kathy Herron, Marty Schmidt, Joy Dressel, Jeff Wagener, Jack Laudenslager, Don Lang, Justin Wenk

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dave Johnston, Gregg Heutel, Juanita Wagner, Carol Stelmach

STAFF PRESENT: Rev. Carole Barner

The September 2021 Council meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Council President, Paul Simons.

OPENING PRAYER – Kathy Herron led us with an opening prayer.

ONA PRESENTATION – Barbara Biedenstein joined us to talk to us about the UCC process of becoming an ONA (Open and Affirming) church. She talked to the congregation in 2018 and 2019 and is the ONA consultant for Eastern Missouri. She talks to churches and helps churches walk through the ONA process. Some facts she gave us are:

- Only about 33 percent of UCC churches nationwide are ONA.
- Being ONA is a proclamation that an individual church can make about themselves. It is a public declaration of their welcome and affirmation to all persons, specifically to LGBTQ individuals. It focuses on these groups because these are groups that are legally and culturally discriminated against.
- Churches go through a period of a one year to three year discernment process to try to draw the whole congregation into the conversation.
- Being ONA is a public proclamation that says this is who we are as a body of Christ. There are a few fundamental aspects that are recommended for all ONA processes, led by leaders within the congregation. The process should not divide congregation. If the process seems like it will split the church, the recommendation is to back up a bit and re-think the process.

Questions and comments by Council members:

- What law exists in Missouri that allows discrimination in St. Louis County or Sunset Hills? *Laws aren't written yet to prevent discrimination by sexual gender or orientation. It is not illegal to deny housing or employment to an LGBTQ person. Thirty-seven states still do not have anti-discrimination statutes. Less than 15 do have those.*
- Maybe we should go through the interim search process before we attempt an ONA process. But this is what is dividing our church. Other members disagree with this. It might be one of the issues but not all of the issues.
- Would Pastor Carole handle a wedding if it involved an LGBTQ couple? *Carole would be fine with it. She does serve a congregation but she will go along with St. Lucas by-laws and what is allowed.*
- This issue came up about 3 or 4 years ago with a previous pastor and members didn't get a good answer. The council would not say you couldn't do it and we should allow it. There is nothing in our constitution and by-laws that prohibits ministers from doing a marriage or a funeral or a baptism to any LGBTQ individual.
- How could we be an ONA church and not publicize it with rainbow banners and letterhead? *Barb said you shouldn't be an ONA church without publicizing it.*
- Three years seems like an unbelievable period of time. A suggestion would be to recommend that Pastor Carole and Pastor Vicki talk to each other and ask them if they feel reluctant about marriages, baptisms or burials. Council would like to hear back from them what it is they need to do that ASAP.

CONSENT AGENDA – Paul said that there were 6 items in the Consent Agenda and asked if anyone wanted anything pulled out for discussion. Marty wants the Preschool Board minutes taken out. Marty made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, excluding the Preschool Board minutes and Jack seconded. Acceptance of the Consent Agenda passed.

- Council Minutes – August 24, 2021
- Cemetery Board Minutes – August, 2021
- Council Conversation Notes – September 12, 2021
- Finance Committee Minutes – September, 2021
- Membership & Evangelism Minutes – September, 2021
- Preschool Board Minutes – August, 2021

Discussion followed regarding the Preschool Board minutes. They did a vote by email which is prohibited under the constitution and bylaws. They should not vote by email. In the financial report they have the June 2020 and June 2021 balance sheet in there twice and a motion was made to approve the June 2021 minutes, instead of the financial report. On page 3 it should be July 2020 instead of June 2020. Marty said the meeting was on August 10 and they were going to have another meeting on August 14? On Old Business there is a sentence hanging....Kelly and Ted will.....Joy will review these corrections and forward Council's concerns back to the Pre-School Board.

STAFF REPORTS –

Pastor Vicki – Pastor Vicki was absent due to vacation, but submitted the following list of her activities for September:

- Getting Rev. Barner on board (and many thanks to her for her grace as I worked through my mom's short hospice tenure and death)
- Working with Membership and Evangelism on "reaching out conversations"
- Got keys issued to authorize personnel
- Officiated at the Wagener/Murphy wedding at Eden Seminary over Labor Day
- Worked on the Review of Ministry process, culminating in an Executive Committee meeting
- Worked on the interim process letter (a draft provided to Council)
- Updated interim training through the Interim Ministry Network
- Visits and calls

Pastor Barner – Pastor Carole gave the following list of things she has done this month:

- September has been a time of moving in, meeting people and learning St. Lucas's story.
- **Meetings:** weekly with staff, Membership and Evangelism, Council x 2, Finance Committee x2; Executive Committee and Pastor Vicki, Caring Ministry, Coffee Chat x 2.
- **Education:** Confirmation Class: 3 Wednesday classes, 1 Sunday class, plus Fall Retreat on site at St. Lucas. Bible Study: The Wired Word x1. We now have 7 confirmation students. We are coming to learn how un-churched most of them are. Not a long history of being in church for most of them. Michele will present 2 Bibles on Sunday to 2nd graders.
- **Programming:** Friday evening Church Chat with kids and Michele; Youth Group meeting x 1. Encouraged committee working on the Oktoberfest event coming up. Spooky drive through instead of Trunk or Treat this year.
- **Worship:** Developed bulletin and Preached 9/5; liturgy and young disciples' time 9/12; developed bulletin, lead worship, preached, young disciples' time 9/19 & 26. Introduced new antiphonal Lord's Prayer to choir and rehearsed with them. Utilized this music 9/26. Began preparation for return of Saturday worship service 10/2.
- **Pastoral Care:** Several phone calls; visits with staff; conversation with a family regarding a potential baptism; meeting with Alberta Lichte's family to plan her memorial on 10/15.
- **Communications:** I have had a number of conversations with Megan around best use of media. She is working on updating our website as we are opening up to more ministries in person. We discussed social

media, as our website includes links for our social media presence. As to Face Book, we utilize that regularly for worship and communication with folks who comment there. As for Instagram, our presence is active through our youth ministry team, Amy Bush and Lynn Fey. As to **Twitter?** Megan and I both notice that we do not see churches on Twitter, just pastors. We do not have anyone active on Twitter on behalf of St. Lucas UCC. **With your agreement, she will delete the Twitter icon from our webpage.** She did name Tik Tok as a venue that she has found churches sharing through livestreaming. She named one pastor seated at her desk simply answering questions about church. Megan was surprised what kinds of things people asked – because they simply did not know about Church. Perhaps this is something new we ought to investigate? There is a button for Tik Tok available on our website already.

- I have worked with both Debbie and Megan, as well as the rest of the staff, in developing bulletins over this past month. Megan and I added staff information on the back of the bulletin, rounding out the list with “Ministers – All the People!” We did fail to include the custodial staff on 9/26 but made sure it was there the next week.
- **Looking ahead:** Met with Pastor Vicki and Barb Biedenstein in preparation for conversation with Council around the call to explore becoming ONA as a congregation. Attended day long workshop via Zoom presented by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center on “Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches.” The Lombard studies will be helpful for us all, and several of us were present that day.
- **Wider Church:** Committee On Ministry Preparation co-chair: meeting September 9; MMS Finance and Administration meeting September 9; MoVal Listening and Discernment meeting (Zoom) September 11; St Louis Association Fall Meeting September 18; September 20 brunch with clergy colleague; MMS Clergy Zoom x2 and COM Covenanted Ministry Zoom September 21.
- **Participated in a funeral for her own family.**

OLD BUSINESS

- **June Schmitt Property** – Paul and Debbie signed closing documents at the Title Company on August 31. We netted \$201,089 that went into the General Endowment Fund (which was stated by June Schmitt in her will). It has already been invested.
- **Athletic Field Coordinator** – Gregg brought this up at the Building & Grounds meeting. Ken said the B&G committee didn’t feel much use of the fields was happening this year because Lindbergh has gone back to their own fields. Keith Wendel needs a response. Ken will talk to Wendy. Joy said we should thank Keith Wendel for doing this for so many years.
- **Review of Ministry** – Paul, Debbie, Joy, Jack, Vicki and Carole met via zoom on 9/13 and went over some items that Vicki and Carol put together. They talked about what type of items should be in a review of ministry. The thought is that we want to have a dialogue review as opposed to a quantitative form in the evaluation. Jack said it’s a discussion as to how we can help our ministers do better and how they can help us do better.
- **Fall Event** – Octoberfest is set for 10/9 from 3-5 and worship thereafter. Pat Stephens said they need volunteers to get this thing going. Joy said they are having pre-cooked bratwurst, hotdogs, root beer and Gus’ pretzels. Hopefully people will stay for the Saturday night worship service. There will be fall décor and a band. Ken said Friendship Village has their Octoberfest the same day. Amy will reach out to middle school, confirmands and high school youth to help with the younger kids.
- **Status of Committees** – Welcome to Jeff Wagener for joining Council. Joy gave a report on the nominating committee. Four people said no, and she has 2 people who said yes. Don asked if she is reaching out to current council members to see if they want a second term. Joy said yes. Paul got no positive responses for the Personnel Committee. Council will deal with personnel issues as they arise. Bob Beck wants to volunteer for the Building and Grounds Committee.
- **Other Old Business** – None

NEW BUSINESS

- **Saturday Worship Offering Sign-Ups** – Paul said we need council members to handle the offering for Saturday nights now. Megan sent out a new sign up, including Saturdays.
- **Dave Johnston** – What can we do for Dave Johnston? He will need help getting home and Ken will help. As of now he says there is nothing he needs. Don and Ken will talk to Jan and get a feel for what they need and

will let us know. Debbie feels we should get a gift card, plant, etc. for his return home so that Dave knows Council cares deeply about him. She volunteered to collect the money and purchase this.

- **Interim Process Letter** – Vicki forwarded a letter to Council that she drafted to the congregation concerning the interim process. Vicki wondered if Paul should sign it as well as her. Debbie said Vicki should sign it and then list perhaps list all the council members below.
- **Barner Housing Allowance** – Paul said every year we have to approve the housing allowance for our ministers for the IRS. Vicki's is \$24,000 annually and Carole's is \$35,100.
Paul made the following motion and Jeff seconded:
Approve the housing allowance for Vicki and Carole.
Motion approved.
- **2022 Budget** – Jack talked about the 2022 budget. Everyone on Council has looked at it. Jack said that six weeks ago we got back from committees their proposed spending for next year and plugged all those numbers into the budget along with staff salaries, utilities and office expenses. The other variable is estimating our income. Offering is down and we are hoping for an upswing in November and December. It's quite a large deficit. Not being comfortable with that, what do we need to do to reduce the budget? Jack said one reduction would be the proposal from Building and Grounds to do maintenance on the west parking lot. The Finance Committee recommended that we postpone this project until 2023. The other item was hiring a business manager/bookkeeper. We've had no one apply and so the decision was made to cut that budget in half and not hire anyone until June. We will continue using our outsource bookkeeper, so we took out half of the budgeted amount for the outsourced company assuming we'd get a bookkeeper in June. The Finance Committee is recommending that the benevolences be reduced by 10% except for Loaves and Fishes. Ken wants to know if waiting to reseal the blacktop will be a detriment to the parking lot. Ken will check. Council presents an honest budget and then the congregation needs to approve it. Jeff wants to postpone the decision on Council approval of this budget until he has time to look over the budget a little more. Paul will send an email out asking for a date going forward for another Council meeting to approve it. Kathy asked about the youth/child coordinators. It looks like there is two listed in the budget instead of three. Jack explained that Amy and Lynn are combined on the budget sheet. Staff was given a 2% raise which wasn't a significant increase in the budget. Paul wants to have a designated stewardship program in 2022 which hopefully will bring some results.
- **Other New Business** - None

ADJOURNMENT WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER – Ken made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Don seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m. with Pastor Carole leading us out with the Lord's Prayer.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- October 2 – 5:00 Saturday Evening Worship Starts
- October 7-12 – Simons Vacation
- October 9 – 3:00 Oktoberfest
- October 16-18 – Pastor Carole Vacation
- October 26 – 6:00 Council Meeting

Respectfully submitted,
Debbie Ball
St. Lucas Council Secretary