

**ST LUCAS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
05/24/2022**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Joy Dressel, Donovan Larson Marty Schmidt, Carol Stelmach, Ken Hamilton, Kathy Herron, Dave Johnston, Jack Laudenslager, Paul Simons, Marsha Fey, Jeff Wagener, Jenny Bell, and Juanita Wagner

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Violet Brooks

**STAFF PRESENT:** Rev Vicki Hampton and Rev. Carole Barner

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The May 24, 2022 Council Meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm by President Joy Dressel.

**OPENING PRAYER:** Paul Simons opened the meeting with prayer.

**GUEST SPEAKER:** Dan Herron addressed the Council on two subjects. First, as a member of the Social Justice Committee, Dan presented the idea of having the Metro Trans Umbrella Group speak to the congregation. MTUG's vision statement is to unite the trans community and promote education and visibility in the metro area.

Carol Stelmach asked Dan if he was seeking Council approval for the Social Justice Committee to have MTUG present to the congregation. Dan stated he believed the Social Justice Committee could prepare a proposal to the council. Dan Herron stated that the committee did not want to schedule a presentation from MTUG without first notifying the council.

Donovan Larson added that the Social Justice Committee has heard presentations in the past from organizations like the Arch City Defenders and St. Louis County Police regarding human trafficking.

Jenny Bell brought up the idea of the Social Justice Committee setting up a speaker's series on socially relevant topics. Juanita Wagner asserted that she liked that idea. Marty Schmidt and Carol Stelmach also stated that they liked the idea.

The consensus of the council was to turn the idea of a speaker's series over to the Social Justice Committee to formulate a proposal.

Second, Dan Herron informed the Council that a Meeting Owl has been purchased for the church to assist with hybrid council meetings. Dan described the Owl as having a 360-degree camera on top, speakers in the middle and microphones on the base that can pick up who is speaking in the room so the camera can zoom in on them. Dan added that the Owl can be moved in different classrooms and used for any meeting. Dan said the cost of the Meeting Owl has been paid through the generosity of Marty Schmidt, Marsha Fey and Kim Witbrodt.

## **CONSENT AGENDA:**

Church Council Minutes, April 2022

Special Meeting of Church Council, April 2022

AV Committee Minutes, April 2022

Marty Schmidt moved to adopt the Consent Agenda and Carol Stelmach seconded the motion. Marsha Fey noted the need for a correction to the April Council Meetings to indicate that she was absent from the meeting. Jenny Bell and Donovan Larson noted that Violet Brooks was not in attendance at the April meeting. Jeff Wagener noted both corrections.

**STAFF REPORT:** (Pastor Carole's and Pastor Vicki's reports were sent to the Council before the meeting).

### Pastor Vicki

- Pastor Vicki believes we need a place for parents to retreat with their children and still be present during worship. She said that there is a corner of the South Narthex that is completely empty and believes that would be a good spot for, for example a rocker and perhaps a climbing unit where children can go and where parents can still participate in the service. Carol Stelmach and Jack Laudenslager stated that they thought it was a great idea. A short discussion followed about how to make people aware of this option. Jack Laudenslager moved to approve to creation of this special area and Ken Hamilton seconded. The motion unanimously passed.
- Pastor Vicki asked that everyone take the initiative to place something on the Timeline. It will remain up for a month to 6 weeks. Carol Stelmach had the thought that we should encourage people who are not worshiping in person to send us what they would like to place on the Timeline.

### Pastor Carole

- Pastor Carole mentioned that Michelle Ottinger is working on an extended Vacation Bible School across the whole summer.
- Pastor Carole commended Amy Bush and Lynn Fey for work with the Confirmation class.
- Bible study is kicking off next Thursday in a hybrid format.
- Pastor Carole will be on vacation in Corpus Christi, Texas to assist her daughter who is having surgery. She will be out from May 31 – June 7.
- Juanita Wagner commented that the Rite of Confirmation was great this year.
- Marsha Fey commented about how much Lynn appreciated Carole's input in confirmation. She said that Lynn felt it made a difference that there was someone so educated working with the confirmands.
- Carol Stelmach commented that she heard nothing but great things about Lynn Fey, Amy Bush and Pastor Carole with regard to confirmation.
- Kathy Herron mentioned that Ella (in our most recent Confirmation Class) was injured in volleyball game last night and asked that we keep her in our prayers.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

- Employee Health Insurance: Joy Dressel brought to the council's attention the need to revisit the employee health insurance issue. Joy reminded the Council that it held a special meeting on the April 28, 2022 to approve insurance for 2022. At that special meeting the council had a recommendation from the Personnel Committee that the church move forward with a new Anthem plan. We thought, at that time, we were not going to be able to switch to the United Healthcare Plan (which represented only a 9% increase in premium costs as opposed to the Anthem Plan which was increasing by 45% with a higher hospital deductible) due to the Plan not covering one of our employees sufficiently. Therefore, at special meeting, Council voted to approve the Anthem Plan which had gone up. The next morning, we learned that United Healthcare would cover the employee. Joy asked the council if it was willing to rescind its earlier vote approving the Anthem Plan and vote to approve the United Healthcare Plan? Carol Stelmach moved to rescind the council's approval of the Anthem Plan that took place at the special meeting held of April 28, 2022 and to approve the United Healthcare Plan. Jeff Wagener seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.
- Bank Change: The process of moving from BMO Harris to Enterprise Bank and Trust continues. Carol Stelmach mentioned BMO Harris has been difficult to deal with (up to and including losing our PPP application last year, causing the church and preschool to lose tens of thousands of dollars) So we should feel good about our decision.
- Offering Sign-up: Joy Dressel reminded everyone to sign up for offering slots and use the same on-line sign-up procedure.
- Ushers: Joy Dressel mentioned that our written instructions and duties for ushers is out of date. Joy asked for volunteers to assist in reviewing and rewriting the manual. Kathy Herron and Joy Dressel volunteered.
- Buildings and Grounds: Joy Dressel reminded the council that the task force had created some purchasing policies for the council to review. Joy added that she would not be asking the council to consider them for approval at this meeting because it was not included in the council packet. The Building and Grounds Committee was asked to provide its comments on the proposed policy but has yet to provide any feedback. Joy mentioned that Karl Grattendick had concerns that the current maintenance staff does not provide repair work for the church so that is the reason he has brought in the uninsured folks to help. Carol Stelmach reiterated the council's position that anyone working for the church must be insured. She added that there are many capable insured contractors available for such work.
- In-person/Hybrid Council Meetings: Joy posed the question of whether the council is ready to begin in-person/ hybrid council meetings? Marty Schmidt suggested a quarterly in-person/hybrid meeting. Marty suggested we make the June meeting an in-person and hybrid meeting for those who cannot attend in person as a test case. All council members were in agreement.
- Opening Council Meetings to Congregation Members: Joy Dressel brought up the ongoing issue of open council meetings for discussion. Donovan Larson stated that he feels like we all

need to be able to talk to each other. The argument that things are being discussed in a council meeting that should not be public is a phony argument. He said that school boards have open meetings with the exception of executive sessions for contracts and personnel and that we should do the same. We can provide a limited amount of time for people to speak. Donovan elaborated that it gives a negative impression of our church to say that the council meetings are closed. Kathy Herron stated that every meeting should start with a covenant. Paul Simons noted that we already have a policy that we can have up to 3 people speak at a meeting if they first contact the council president and reserve time. Paul's concern is that you may have non-council people who don't respect the covenant and misinterpret what was said at council. He added there are also people who feel intimidated speaking in front of church members. Paul suggested that if people want to know what goes on in council, they should volunteer to serve on council. Marty Schmidt said we have a work around with the hybrid council meeting technology. We don't need people there in person as they can attend electronically. We can also videotape council meetings to preserve a record of what was said at meetings. Donovan Larson said the problem with the official council minutes is they don't come out until later. Dave Johnston spoke in favor of the existing policy of allowing up to 3 people a meeting to attend after they make arrangements with the president. Paul Simons opined that we would not need to change the constitution to allow for open meetings because our meetings are governed by Robert's Rules of Order. Ken Hamilton spoke in favor of allowing members to attend electronically through a hybrid format. Carol Stelmach feels that the perception of not allowing people to attend the meetings is that we are doing things secretly. We should allow members to attend but definitely set up rules that during the meeting you cannot say anything. Jeff Wagener concurred with Carol. Jeff said we should give members an opportunity to speak at the beginning of the meeting and then they may observe but not speak during the business portion of the meeting. Marsha Fey said it is important that the meetings be open but that it is not a free for all. Marsha suggested that we may need advice from people who have served on school boards. Jenny Bell cited the way MSD handles public participation in board meetings. She said the meetings are online and you can't make a comment during the business portion of the meeting, or you will be muted. Citizens can speak during the designated public speaking portion of the meeting. Joy asked for a show of hands from those who support opening up our council meetings. A majority of council members agreed. Marsha Fey said we need some structure and format. Pastor Vicki said we need to have ground rules and the council will likely not be ready by the June meeting. Marty Schmidt suggested that he and Joy Dressel work with Pastor Vicki to draft proposed ground rules. Pastor Vicki suggested that Dave Johnston be part of that discussion.

- Zoom Guidelines for Congregational Meetings: Joy Dressel mentioned that after this year's semi-annual meeting there was consensus that the current procedures we are using for conducting congregational meetings via Zoom are lacking. Joy noted that we have had a few individuals join the Zoom and not identify themselves. We had members register in advance for the first Zoom meeting we held. Joy posed the question of what to do if an individual will not identify themselves after joining the meeting on Zoom. Ken Hamilton said that if they refuse to give us their name, we should not allow them to participate. Kathy Herron suggested we should require people to join 15 minutes prior to the meeting to sign in. Pastor Vicki suggested that if someone shows up and you know who they are, then fine. If someone shows up and we cannot identify them, we should not let them in the meeting. Jack Laudenslager

noted that this issue brings up the problem of not having a good handle on who are our members.

Confidentiality of Donation Records: Joy Dressel brought up the issue of who at the church should have access to donor records. We have had a longstanding policy that only the office staff can see records on donations. Currently, Debbie Heagle is the only person with access. The question is, should we allow others to have access? Carol Stelmach said she believes more than one person should have access. She believes the Stewardship Committee and pastor need this information. The information does not need to include the individual names. Donovan Larson said the software we currently use can identify giving units without giving the names. He said there is value in knowing how the giving units are distributed. Paul Simons added that pastors need this information not out of idle curiosity but in conducting their pastoral duties. Jack Laudenslager agreed with Paul. If 5 people make up 50% of the church's giving and they leave, we need to know that for budgetary purposes. Carol Stelmach noted that when there is an unusually large gift, it should be acknowledged. If someone's giving has dropped dramatically, they may be having some personal problems and need support. Kathy Herron said that she always liked the anonymity of the current donation access policy. She said she would need time to process a change. Kathy also said that she wondered if there could be favoritism with the pastors having access to donation information, but that would not be her concern with the current pastors. Pastor Vicki said that from a strictly accounting standard, it is a bad idea to have only one person have this knowledge and from a pastoral perspective, she thinks it makes sense for pastors to have this information because when giving drops off it can be a sign of personal troubles. This data also helps with recognizing trends. Pastor Vicki said at least 2 people on the finance committee should have this information. It is good governance.

Carol Stelmach recommended the finance committee discuss this issue and bring a recommendation back to the council. Joy Dressel agreed to turned it over to finance committee.

- Keeping Religious Communities Safe: Jenny Bell noted that we really need to step up our efforts to have active shooter training given the events in the news. Jenny has a video and a free active shooter trainer. It was determined that the Executive committee will discuss this matter further.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

- Stewardship Committee: Joy Dressel is going to pull together the Stewardship committee, that is comprised of Julie Murphy, Katy Forand Don Sabbert, and ask them to begin work on a stewardship project. Carol Stelmach suggested that we turn them loose to come up with some ideas and bring them to the council. Carol said we should remind them that stewardship is more than financial giving. Pastor Carole encouraged the committee to look at the UCC website for stewardship ideas that are theologically grounded. Pastor Vicki asked to be part of that committee.

Jeff Wagener moved to adjourn the meeting. Kathy Herron seconded the Motion. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m. with The Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Wagener  
Secretary