

Church Council Minutes Union Church, April 28, 2014

Present: Jean Boyce (Clerk), Jenny Bromley (Mission), Kevin Burke, (CL&G), Shirley Carlberg (Treasurer), Eric Dodson (Admin), Joan English (recorder), Kent Gilbert (Pastor), Doug Hindman (Vice Mod.), Dorie Hubbard (Worship), Rachel Small Stokes (Assoc. Pastor), Patti Smithson (Incoming Fin. Sec.), Paul Smithson (PRB), Bill Stolte (Prop), Barb Taylor (FD), Michelle Tooley (Mission), Gail Wolford (Moderator)

Devotion: Doug led the devotional, a reflection on the story of the burning bush from Exodus, encouraging us, as church leaders, to use “what’s in our hands” – using the skills and gifts we already possess to serve. February minutes approved.

Financials Shirley distributed reports, invited questions. Income was good in January and March, pretty dismal in February. She will give Boards their transaction reports through the end of April soon, so they can track their expenses and check for accuracy. She and Dave Kobersmith will reformulate the Chart of Accounts, to more accurately reflect which Designated Funds are untouchable and which can be repurposed. This will make our actual cash position clearer as well.

We are about \$2000 short on the Capital Campaign income, which is a pretty small fraction of the million dollar + total.

Shirley and Dave will go to the bank on 4/29 to discuss the \$140,000 line of credit – interest rate, etc.

Long-term Financial Strategy Rachel distributed the list of ideas generated at the Board Orientation – eight steps were listed, each with progress reports. Some highlights:

- Revs. Kent & Rachel, Dave Kobersmith, Doug Hindman and Gail Wolford have come up with a good list of candidates for the Task Force, unfortunately the person they’d hoped would lead it has accepted another task of ministry.
- Online giving is up and running – working well. There is a charge per transaction on credit card giving, and by text. But if you set up an automatic contribution, you can’t forget to give, and some people simply don’t use paper checks.
- Tithing Testimonial video will be made by Dave Harl, who is generously donating \$1500 worth of his time to the project – a 3-5 minute video providing stewardship education. He met with staff to do some story boarding, will be filming in the next 2 – 3 weeks.
- No-paper collaboration – at the moment, the resources available don’t jive with the money we want to (not) spend. The most pressing feature we need is recording and keeping track of votes made by email.
- Planned giving – Hilliard Lyons, the firm that holds the Lambert Fund, will meet with the Finance Board at its May 13, 6:30 pm, meeting – anyone is welcome to attend. There will also be a Planned Giving element in the house meetings.
- Stewardship Consulting – Dave has been in contact with RSI (the company we used for our Capital Campaign), he will report. Rachel and Kent are keeping an eye out for church related workshops or a local consultant
- Spring fundraiser- moving ahead. The May Consider will introduce the idea, a letter will go out a couple of days later. There has been \$20,500 offered as a matching-dollar challenge. If that challenge is met, this year’s shortfall will be addressed. Everyone understands, however, that it is NOT a fix for years to come. Dave and Shirley have done some figuring and can cover 2014 – and likely 2015 – budget, using reserves and by rearranging some line items, and not have to reduce staff or programs. BUT a successful “Spring Forward” campaign this year, and improved financial strategies, will help ensure that our fall stewardship campaign will be the only one of the year moving forward. We absolutely do not want to split giving into 2 campaigns every year.

This campaign will be 2 weeks long, the target is \$20,500. Eric suggested raising that goal to \$30 or 35,000 - \$2200 a day, giving ourselves a cushion. To the question – what would be cut, programs or people?

Unfortunately, the answer is people. Our fixed expenses have increase \$20 - \$25,000 a year & we need to investigate other revenue streams.

Rachel and Kent invited the group to celebrate the 13 new members this year, the successful and valuable Lent opportunities and the number of children at the Children's Moment – we are vibrant and growing. Money is a solvable problem. CL&G was thanked for the consistent schedule of membership activities – inquiry session on the 4th Sundays, opportunity to join on the 2nd Sundays. Substantive giving from new members takes time to develop.

Gift card opportunity We'd like to take advantage of this – if we can sell gift cards to folks, which they can use exactly where they'd be spending money, we can receive 5% of the amount of the card. Help is needed to coordinate that.

It was stressed that, when we discuss “borrowing,” we must make it clear that we are committed to NEVER borrowing money for Operating Expenses. Some active members & participants were not here when the authorization to conduct the Capital Campaign was voted upon – it was stated that borrowing would be for Capital Campaign only and we have to make certain that everyone knows that.

Question – when do we declare the Capital Campaign over? Shirley replied that we do so when the last of the bills has been paid. We have the on-going obligation of staff salaries. It was stressed that we also must make that clear to the same newer population.

The campaign will wrap up on May 18, Church Council will meet on May 19 & will see the results, Congregational Meeting will be May 21, and the totals and revised budget will be presented. We are prayerfully confident that cuts will NOT need to be made.

In response to a question, Shirley responded that she and Dave have begun some forward-thinking on the 2015 budget, but are not prepared to present one at the meeting.

House meetings Rachel reported that the congregation has been divided into 13 groups, 9 of which have set dates. The important points to address:

1. Get to know our neighbors
2. Discuss financial issues and challenges
3. What is God calling to do next?

The opening question will be “What is the best time you've had at Union Church?”

Every group will have new members in it. Facilitators will be Kent, Rachel, Dave, Doug, Gail.

Church Council was asked to pledge their support to the Spring Forward Campaign and all did so.

Kent reported the Task Force's Charge: The Financial (Sustainability) Task Force is asked to propose concrete sustainable responses to projected deficits. As a small group with financial and congregational understanding, the task force will research and outline options that will keep our mission and ministry at the center of all we do, even while proposing possible changes to the way that ministry is expressed. In proposed solutions, the task force will be looking for ways for our mission to grow and “thrive,” not just “survive” with strategies for the congregation to consider, adopt and implement.

Below is extracted from March 16, 2014 Annual Meeting minutes – just to confirm for ourselves that Council's conversation about financial matters is proceeding as directed by the congregation -- *Bill Stolte spoke to asking the Finance Board and Church Council to seek and present a balanced budget for the remainder of 2014 and for 2015. Debt is a serious problem that needs to be faced directly at the beginning, rather than at the end of the year. We all need to work to support our house. Rather than hamstring CC with a motion, he feels CC should seek and come back to the congregation with a creative solution. Bob Boyce seconded the request that Bill presented and asked for transparency on all board actions as we come together to address our debt. In response to questions from Sue Blythe, what we have now is a line of credit that is not yet formalized as a specific mortgage with a time limit for paying it off. She reminded us that thus is pertinent to the amount of dollars we must raise to pay it off. John C. hopes we will know all this by our May meeting. Dave K. said that he and Shirley would be meeting with the bank within the next 2 months and that the interest rate (currently 4.5%) is set for 2 years and is renewable. Bill S. was concerned that there was no regular meeting of CC scheduled, and Rev. Kent assured him that these financial discussions were to be engaged at the new and continuing board*

orientation meeting this next Saturday, March 22. Additional concern was expressed about borrowing/drawing on the line of credit to support salaries. John C. reminded us that as we continue to give to the Capital Campaign we decrease the line of credit. Merlin asked and it was confirmed by Dave that there is a way for us to make personal loans to the church and be repaid at a lower interest rate than the bank would charge.

Reports

Admin-Eric, new chairperson, asked Dave K to identify 3 most important tasks for this year, and 2 or 3 less urgent ones, and will focus their work on these.

Faith Dev – They are using their Lambert funds, and an additional \$2000 this year, to reduce the deficit.

Patti Smithson is the incoming Financial Secretary

Mission – commended Willie Dodson on his work as interim director of WCSC.

CL&G – Kevin Burke spoke of the powerful conversations shared at the last 4th Sunday newcomers' meeting

Properties – sanctuary renovation – in the works, the basic plan is to replace the carpet, refinish floors, reposition pews. Diagrams have been circulated in newsletters & bulletins, that plan has not changed. When pews are repositioned, we'll lose seating – about 125, leaving 290 on the ground floor. Estimate last spring was about \$25,000 we have \$30,000 to work with. Plans will be presented at May 21 meeting, quotes will be updated, work will hopefully take place in July.

Rachel – 7 weeks of Lent was full of great opportunities – of course, some were better attended than others – but, on the whole, it was a huge success. Faith Development will do more evaluating at its May meeting. Easter was wonderful, great energy. 13 new members this year, and 2-4 more are giving it serious thought. Susie Ritchie has helped Rachel tremendously with making contact with those who sign in. Music Search – Committee has been faithfully meeting every Thursday. They are open to hiring a Choir Director/Music Minister AND an Organist, or one person for all those functions. They've already had preliminary conversations with 2 people, and 2 more soon. Ads are going out, mostly to places that will run them with no charge, and AGO, Choristers Guild and, surprisingly, interest is being generated through Facebook. They hope to hire by May 30. Rob Hayden can play Sundays until then.

Kent – affirmed the success of the Lent programs. Heather Richardson has been hired as WCSC Director. She and Willie will both work in May, then she'll take over. Kent has just received a phone call from the Pacific School of Religion, which floated the idea of using Union Church as a home base for some distance learning. No definite plan, or even preliminary plan, but this is precisely the kind of new revenue stream we've been brainstorming about.
Next meeting May 19. Dismissed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Joan English