

Church Council Minutes Union Church, October 20, 2014

Present: Jean Boyce (Clerk), Shirley Carlberg (Treasurer), Gina Chamberlain (Sustainability), Eric Dodson (Admin), Joan English (recorder), Sune Frederiksen (sustainability), Betty Hibler (CL&G), Doug Hindman (Vice Mod.), Dave Kobersmith (Church Admin), Debbonnaire Kovacs (FD), Leslie Small Stokes (N&C), Rachel Small Stokes (Assoc. Pastor), Bill Srsic (Finance), Bill Stolte (Properties), Michelle Tooley (M&S)

Devotion:

Betty offered the devotional, a meditation from the United Church of Christ that reflected upon moving beyond national borders into issues of poverty and justice internationally, based upon the Bible passage Matthew 26:11 "For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have me."

We began the meeting without a quorum but established one quickly after starting the meeting. September minutes approved.

Building Use Policy reviewed, fees changed – mainly lowered, in the hope that we'd have more weddings & meetings here at a lower price. The 2013 budget projected income of \$10,000 for building rental, we realized just \$3300.

After discussion of several points: establishment of a "bench fee" to organist to help an outside musician become familiar with our instruments and a "pulpit fee" to our pastors if an outside minister is used, addition of handling table linens to host/ess' responsibilities, Betty moved to adopt the revised Building Use Policy. No second required, unanimously approved. We need to market ourselves effectively – connect with a lead person at nonprofit and for-profit organizations, representatives of communities – who/how can this be done best?

Discussion of Sustainability Report – Boards had been asked to review it and comment:

Faith Development: several ideas seemed like "last resorts" to them. They are:

Reducing pay increases for staff

One pastor per Sunday

Youth Director functions being taken over by Associate Pastor

They are already participating in fund raising – Youth raised \$2000 for Passport Camp this past summer. They also offered to invite (but not require) donations to VBS meals. They don't buy new curriculum every year, and save money there. They would consider workshops. Only liked the "Big Event" idea, if it would be in partnership with other local big events. The thought was aired of creating an internship for Berea college students to handle communication – several with experience spoke for & against this idea. A fear was that we'd have several things started and not finished, we'd also be allowing/asking someone to represent us in the wider world. Perhaps a Task Force, or Team, of 2 or 3 people can take on the task of Communication. Reminder that there is a list of local, free calendars & event listings in the office if anyone wants to use it. There was discussion of partnering with Main Street Café – if a group wanted to have food catered in, we would provide the menu options and contact info to the group using the building, they would make their own arrangements with the Café, and the owner would make a donation of between 8 & 18% to the church. Some were uncomfortable with this but it's just an idea, no commitment made. Dave will run the tax implications – if any – past Rob Hayden.

Nurture & Care: very excited about a Chataqua-type event to use the building, liked the idea of establishing a commercial kitchen. As a self-fundraiser they were keen on the idea of selling hot chocolate at the Christmas Parade and doing some outreach at the same time. They also appreciated the idea of some financial education – hard numbers from long-time givers. Leslie stated that those of her generation, and younger, really haven't had budgeting education, instruction in investing, nor the experience of figuring out how to give regularly and helpfully to a church. Gina offered to help create a curriculum to help with that.

As a way to help pastors manage time, the Board will take on the visiting of those in nursing homes.

Les offered to help register people with Kroger's Community Rewards Program after worship, and will see if others with laptops will as well. Several expressed excitement about that idea, and suggested posting it on Facebook and inviting others to share it.

CL&G: First celebrated that we have taken in 29 new members in 2014! The 4th Sunday newcomer meetings have been tremendously valuable, and bonding, for those involved. Most who attend the sessions do join. Now we have to nurture the members we have, and figure out why some of them leave. Susie Ritchie and Rachel meet weekly to review the pew sign-in sheets and follow up with visitors. WNL feeds 65-70 per week and is profitable. We could also put out a basket for donations at after-worship social events. The Board has realized that they can decrease their budget for next year.

Finance: They echoed Faith Development's dislike of suggesting that our Associate Pastor take on direct leadership of the Youth Group program. Suggestion to find other audiences for our message – online or print resources that we don't currently use that can further our reach, promote online giving.

The church is ready to accept loans from church members to reduce the principal of our line of credit at an interest lower than the 4.5% we pay the bank. We pay \$7000 a year in interest and, if we have enough participation at a lower interest rate, we can save about \$3000 a year.

Bill asked about the external audit conducted about a year ago – we haven't received a report as yet.

Admin: while acknowledging the difficulty of finding additional money, they would like to see us budget for a raise for every staff person of 5%.

Properties: not sure they can reduce spending by 20% - utilities keep rising, we have the benefit of 12 solar panels' worth of offset, but energy prices have risen to negate that as savings of dollars. Question of how we got into the pattern of offering a sabbatical after 5 years of service instead of 6, as the word is defined. Les spoke to that – denominations have moved to that to reduce burnout. Most clergy persons actually leave parish ministry after 5 years.

Discussion of pavers. Not certain where they'd go – replacing the new sidewalk? Yes, but in stages.

Shirley had the idea of helping people reduce their guilt over their carbon footprints – lease solar panels to benefit the church. 90 + are still available. The church has a stated goal of having half our energy be provided by our solar panels by 2020.

Leasing 4 per year for 10 years is the goal. They are \$750 each.

Mission: they are adamantly opposed to cutting giving. They very much liked the Chatauqua idea . Doug notes that, if we invite members to tithe, the church can set an example by tithing 10% to mission.

Sune expressed disappointment that Council seems hesitant to move concrete steps to raise \$60,000 – the Task Force was asked to save money, raise money, none of their ideas were personal – they didn't even like some of them themselves. Would like to see an asset inventory - we don't know what we own and risk wasting money by spending on things we don't need to. The Report suggested that the youth undertake this, and that it would also create ownership of church and contents to them. Suggestion that we can do an inventory of people – their skills, what they're passionate about and want to do.

Further thinking on the issue of communication: we need a broad picture of fundraising, need to take advantage of our building and its history – can we be part of an observance of the Battle of Richmond, etc.

Think about online fundraising such as gofundme.

We must get our fellow Bereans past the idea of getting everything free, as Berea College has done.

We should join the Chamber of Commerce -- \$50 investment per year. Concern was expressed about political activities of the Chamber at the national level. We were assured that this is not the case at the local level.

Debbonnaire moved, Eric seconded that Union Church join the Berea Chamber of Commerce at \$50 per year, the funds to come from account #5175. Discussion – who would attend meetings? Pastor/s? Proposed conversation between Kent, Rachel, Dave and Doug will settle this. Motion approved.

Financials Shirley celebrated that we are in better shape in 2014 at this point in the year than we have been in the past 3 years.

Discussion of changing meeting date to 3rd Tuesday since several members are in the Classic Chorale on Mondays. After discussion, it was decided to ask if Boards can choose a Council representative who can attend on 3rd Mondays and hope for a full table. Then revisit if necessary.

Rev. Rachel – please hold Klara Welsh in prayer, she had a fall at church but wasn't hurt badly. Reid Livingston's father is dying, at The Terrace. Childrens Church is going well – hallelujah and amen, they got the volunteers they needed. Fallout from the Fairness vote is occupying pastoral time, we shall keep pushing! We will soon say goodbye to Steve and Ann Rhodes and David Milley. We had a great celebration in worship with the St. John's Bible. Rev. Kent is in Japan, but will be back to preach Sunday the 26h. Rachel is attending the KY Council of Churches Annual Assembly Oct. 25 & 26. Next meeting October 20.

Respectfully submitted,
Joan English