

Church Council Minutes
Union Church, November 17, 2014

Present: Jean Boyce (Clerk), Shirley Carlberg (Treasurer), Abigale Embry (Worship), Joan English (recorder), Kent Gilbert (Pastor), Betty Hibler (CL&G), Doug Hindman (Vice Mod.), Wyndee Holbrook (Pastoral Relations Board), Dave Kobersmith (Church Admin), Debbonnaire Kovacs (FD), John Payne (M&S), Bill Stolte (Properties), Gail Wolford (Moderator)

Devotion:

Doug offered the devotional, a meditation from the Dalai Lama on the messages of every religion: love, compassion and forgiveness. Our task & challenge is to put these into practice. October minutes approved with the addition of Bill Stolte's question about the external audit conducted last year. (Note from Kent: About the audit, sorry we didn't get back to that during the meeting. I have made contact with Suellen and she sent me a note on Friday, November 14th, that she has located all her notes and is compiling them as we speak. As this is the first contact we've had, I'm taking that as a good sign. She knows the time pressure we are under.) Minutes had previously been altered, and redistributed, to correct the impression that FD had enthusiasm for the "Big Event" idea. Debbonnaire, personally, stated she felt that Union Church has the talent to populate a Chautauqua type event – it was not a Faith Development Board idea.

Shirley reported that we are in better shape at this point in 2014 than we have been in all her previous years as Treasurer. Despite the fact that income is not quite as projected, expenses aren't as high either & we find ourselves about \$2000 to the good. She hopes that December is as good a year as previous Decembers.

Action Items:

It is required by the IRS that we approve a pension policy yearly – ours is as follows:

All employees are eligible the first day of their employment for pensions. While they are employed they may make tax sheltered contributions and after-tax contributions to their plan. For ministers a fixed percentage of 14% of compensation and for lay employees a fixed cash amount may be mutually agreed upon each year not later than February 1.

Moved by Debbonnaire, seconded by Jean that it be approved for 2015 – discussion followed. Does Dave believe that this is an adequate statement of policy – yes, he does, for now – always can be revisited. Approved.

Date for Annual Budget Meeting – Several dates proposed and discussed. It was agreed that we can have the meeting in early '15, to avoid rushing ourselves at the Christmas season and risk not having a quorum (25 members) AND we'll have the benefit of knowing how we'll end up at the end of 2014. January 11, 2015, was proposed - after worship service and a lunch (lunch plans to be made later). Boards are asked to have their requests in by Nov. 24, Church Council will meet on December 15, budget will be available after worship on January 4, as per the Budget Policy. Question was raised if we must present a balanced budget for 2015. Jean mined the minutes of the called meeting for budget revision of May 21, 2014 and reported that the motion passed was: this body is urging the Financial Task Force, with the Finance Board and Church Council to move toward a balanced budget for 2015.

Several Boards have already completed their 2015 financial requests/budgets. Admin, of course, is responsible for the largest expenditure – salaries.

Discussion of the ideas proposed by the Sustainability Task Force – several are planned to be undertaken by Boards, but we cannot project or attach any dollar amounts to them for this coming budget year.

Bill moved, Debbonnaire seconded, that the Annual Budget meeting be held January 11, 2015. Passed.

Nominating New Board members Time to start thinking about populating Boards with new members to be voted upon at the March Annual Meeting. Constitution shows that Church Council should approve the number of members per Board 4 months in advance of elections (Constitution calls for a minimum of four per Board). Boards' work can also be done by volunteers who are not elected. Abby requested an additional member on Worship. No action taken, but individual Boards should report their needs to Church Council & Nominating Board.

Discussion of Sustainability Assignments Report – Debbonnaire reported that Faith Development is happy to put out a donation basket at events and also takes seriously Les Small Stokes' expressed wish for some educational sessions around tithing, budgeting, faithful financial stewardship. Leslie, Gina and Debbonnaire are brain storming about offering some educational opportunities as part of our observance of Lent.

Discussion of solar panel item – reworded to state that individuals are invited to lease solar panels to decrease their carbon footprints & benefit the church – not that the church will increase its projected number. Bill stated that an even better way to save money on energy will be to address our “leaky places,” specifically sanctuary windows and a door in the mechanical room.

Discussion of this format to track ideas – does it work? Yes, agreed. Dave offered to update this document at Church Council meetings to keep it as a filter for our work.

Betty suggested that other church members (who are not on Boards) might be involved, and that we have a responsibility to the congregation to report. It was suggested this document be put on the website.

Discussion of the item asking Admin to reconsider fee reduction. They are open to revisiting this – their thought was that we might host more events at a lower price.

Gail talked with Peter Hackbert of the EPG (Entrepreneurship for the Public Good) and he has put Union Church on the list of internships students may choose for the summer.

Question if a motion was needed to move forward with the idea of us sharing ethernet capabilities with Berea College -- no, not needed. The plan had been for this to happen in time for the Christmas Concert – unsure if that’s still in the works. We could, potentially, save \$100 per month.

The Little Church, Big Church document was distributed. Betty wanted us to take stock of where we are, 7 years (7!) after John Krueger’s visit when we first encountered the idea that we were moving from a Pastoral Church to a Program Church, and how we have navigated the tensions & challenges in this process. We are challenged to take potential “tension points” and navigate them without crisis. Need for better communication again stressed (newsletter deadline tomorrow, 3rd Tuesday of the month). It was suggested that the article referenced – Sizing Up a Congregation for New Member Ministry by Arlin Rothauge be posted on the website – or linked.

Gail reflected on her illness – that Kent and Rachel both visited her, and so did many church family members - that when one of us cares for another, we ALL care for each other. Abby echoed this in talking about hospital chaplaincy.

Discussion of revisiting how the pastor best serves the congregation, re-writing Pastors’ job descriptions is going to happen soon. Individual members need to become more accustomed to changing their expectations of Pastors’ duties.

Betty and Gail ask Church Council to identify specific means by which the congregation can look at these together.

Suggestion of bringing Routhage here as a consultant. Betty expressed excitement about the church and the direction(s) we’re heading!

Dave suggested that one place to keep this in our minds is to merge it with the sustainability document.

Also suggested that the best way to address this is in neighborhood meetings. Perhaps this can happen in the spring, at Lent.

Suggestion that a Sunday testimony (Gail’s reflection in particular) might be very effective.

When asked about next steps, Betty stated that she thinks the budget needs our attention first, and does like the idea of house meetings.

Board Reports

Pastoral Relations: Wyndee reported on the Pastoral Survey, which was completed by 81 people – a really great turnout in such things. It was overwhelmingly appreciative and affirming. PRB was commended for a well-out together system and instrument. Both pastors are taking the results to heart.

Mission: Christmas with a Conscience netted about \$3000 total for the participating groups, including about \$300 from the soup lunch to BFCO. Some organizations sold items, that isn’t included in the total. Now – on to helping St. Clare Catholic Church with their Christmas Baskets.

CL&G: Much appreciation was expressed for the sanctuary configuration – it brings new energy into the space.

Worship is looking forward to Advent. They are seeking some help to do both interior and exterior decorating. In the future, Berea College may help as well, as they look toward a wider audience to broadcast the Christmas Concert.

Pastors: Rev. Rachel is on vacation this week. She invites all to Faith Development’s first Family Faith Day, 11-23 after church. We received one person at WNL on 10-29 (Dan Frilling), and 3 on 11-9 (Laura Nagle & Jimmie Lewis, and Charlie Hoffman). There was great affirmation of CL&G and the Pastors’ system of 4th Sunday gatherings, 2nd Sunday joinings. Some have drifted & we’ll need to figure out why and how to combat that No hayride this year – insurance insists we have a wagon with sides, couldn’t find one.

There have been 4 baptisms this fall, last week all 3 Wellinghurst children were baptized, Rachel’s first baptism!

Nurture & Care has become newly invigorated, and is keeping up with the Grief series of booklets and has a plan for visiting members in nursing homes.

Next Church Council meeting is December 15, Kent will do the devotional.

Respectfully submitted,
Joan English