

**Church Council Minutes**  
**Union Church, December 15, 2014**

Present: Jean Boyce (Clerk), Jenny Bromley (M&S), Shirley Carlberg (Treasurer), Abigale Embry (Worship), Joan English (recorder), Kent Gilbert (Pastor), Betty Hibler (CL&G), Doug Hindman (Vice Mod.), Dave Kobersmith (Church Admin), Debbonnaire Kovacs (FD), Rachel Small Stokes (Assoc. Pastor), Bill Srsic (Fin), Bill Stolte (Properties), Gail Wolford (Moderator)

**Devotion:**

Kent offered the devotional, *Noisy Advent*, by Mary Luti, from the UCC Advent Devotional *Tear Open the Heavens*, and opened the meeting with prayer. November minutes were approved.

**Financial/Budget Planning**

Shirley reported first on November Financial statements – we are in good shape! Unusual for Union Church, we are “in the black” at this time of year, expenses are under control and we are looking forward to a December & January of strong giving (if the pattern of many previous years holds). We were also given a tremendously generous gift of \$40,000 to be used in 2015 and beyond as Church Council sees fit.

Shirley has received some recommendations by Suellen Rowe, from her 2013 review of finances. The biggest was that our Chart of Accounts needs to be reworked, to follow GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles). Shirley and Dave have identified video and printed resources to help in that endeavor. Also, the way we report income is non-standard, we have “in & out” accounts that aren’t reflected in “income & expenses,” and should be (an example is the Christmas Eve offering which benefits BUURR – it’s not reported as income nor is the check we write to BUURR reported as expense, and should be). Jenny pointed out that this will give us a more accurate picture of what we are actually doing with our money. The WNL money should also be reflected in the statements. Suellen had a few more recommendations and we look forward to her complete report, by the end of December.

2015 Budget – Shirley distributed it, with potential areas of concern highlighted. Finance Board took to heart the request that we move toward a balanced budget, and this one is – within \$30. Before we began, Shirley asked the question “What do we do if the congregation does not pass a budget?” Kent reported that we would likely ask the assembled body for approval for 3 months’ funding of utilities and salaries, and re-work the budget.

The one-time gift of \$40,000 is included in Income. Also included is \$20,000 projected for a Spring Forward Campaign. There was discussion of routinizing a spring stewardship campaign, instead of approaching it from a place of panic – this would allow us to reach people who join after the fall campaign, or who have a better idea of their tax year, or would like to make a special gift, to participate. This would happen after Easter, likely May-ish. Bill Stolte wondered if people might be holding back some of their pledging ability in anticipation of a Spring Forward campaign, Bill Srsic responded that we don’t have enough data to either support or dismiss that idea. Patti Smithson is helping to provide some data on those who have turned in pledge cards in the past, but have stopped, can we figure out why?

Kent reported that he and Rachel have changed our new member process – now there will be a second meeting added to include Stewardship and our new folks will be provided with information telling them how the money they give benefits their own specific, stated interests. Faith Development is planning an educational series on budgeting, pledging, etc, still looking at Lent for that. Dave and Rachel are going to attend a course on religious fundraising in late January.

Bill Stolte questioned the line item of \$5000 (4017) Sustainability Projects. It seems high, given the length of “gestation” projects need. It was agreed that this is a “soft” number, we really have no idea how much money Sustainability projects may raise, but it’s also a fairly low number. We have income due from Amazon Smile, Kroger rewards, and the mugs that Turning Wheel is making. Question of the idea of people loaning money to the church – that process is in place, with people ready to lend, if we need them.

Also – we need to widen the circle with the Sustainability document and ideas. Boards are already stretched.

Discussion of terminology – should 6205 “Rainy Day Fund” be changed to something like “Future Contingency,” since Rainy Day implies a saving, not a spending, account. Also, should 5276 imply “Future” as more than a 2015 potential need?

Discussion turned to salaries, staff was asked to leave.

With no Administration Board member present, Council was unable to discuss rationale for salary increases, and therefore could not approve budget for Congregational approval. There will be a called meeting after worship service on the 21<sup>st</sup>, with an Admin board rep, to further discuss and, perhaps, move to approve 2015 budget.

Sustainability Document/Tasks Dave distributed a document listing assignments agreed to at previous Council meeting, and any action taken. He'll do the same at subsequent Council meetings to keep the Boards on track and keep the document at the forefront in planning processes. We again discussed the importance of involving the many talented church members we have, and not making these be assignments for Boards to DO, they can also assist & oversee.

Bill Stolte requested that Properties Board number be increased to 6 elected members. He made that a motion, Betty seconded, passed. Nominating Board is aware of the need, and has identified the people to nominate for election.

### **Board Reports**

**CL&G:** No WNL the 24<sup>th</sup> or 31<sup>st</sup>, they are coordinating the finger food supper after the 5:30 Christmas Eve service.

**Mission:** Christmas Baskets project is under way, in partnership with St. Clare Church.

**Worship:** received compliments on the sanctuary decorations- looks lovely!

**Pastors:** Rev. Rachel reported & celebrated Les' passing her committee & professional success!

We have lots to celebrate – the impromptu Christmas pageant was a great time for participants and spectators. Faith Dev hosted a tremendously successful Family Faith Day, which brought several families we haven't seen before into the church. Several non-Board members' participation was celebrated – Jack Marshall for Habitat builds and Stephanie Woodie & Dana Rousey on the Christmas pageant. WCSC's 120<sup>th</sup> birthday lunch was well attended and they made more money than they expected to!

Gabe and Pearl have been wonderful and creative at recent worship services. Berea College Christmas Concert was a joy. Rachel will be away in early January at a NGLI Conference and, later in the month, at the training event mentioned earlier. Pastoral care needs are increasing, as winter and Christmas both approach.

Rev. Kent stressed the pastoral care needs again, we have 20 people in crisis. He will be away in early January at the Academy of Preachers event, training people to be mentors. Abby Embry will be preaching at that event as well! He is also due for some surgery, hernia repair, in late January/early February, dates to be determined.

Next Church Council meeting should be January 19, but it's a holiday: Martin Luther King, Jr., Day. It was decided to meet anyway. Betty will offer the devotional.

Discussion of Agenda for January 11 meeting. It was agreed that this would be the appropriate time to present the Sustainability Task Force's document to the wider congregation. Dave will offer a brief report, perhaps co-chairs as well. We're still waiting for a volunteer to be available to sell gift cards, of which the church would retain 3-8% of the face value.

Respectfully submitted,  
Joan English