

Church Council Notes Union Church, April 19, 2021

Present: Joan English (Recorder), Dave Kobersmith (Staff), Marty Hensley (Finance), Jennifer Melton (Worship), Carla Gilbert (church member), Kent Gilbert (Pastor), Kim Kobersmith (Nominating), Amy Schill (CL&G), Bob Boyce (Properties), Mary Lou Wiese (Nurture & Care), Linda Parsons (clerk), Betty Hibler (M&S), Shirley Carlberg (Bookkeeper), Paul Smithson (Moderator), Cheryl Stone (church member)

A quorum was present. Our devotional was read by Joan English, a piece by Mark Nepo from The Book of Awakening. March minutes approved. Meeting began with introductions and a Question of the Day - What word encapsulates Easter for you?

Added Action Item: From Finance Board - motion from Finance Board: The Stewart-Hindman bequest of (approx.) \$500,000 shall be used to

- Pay off all of Union Church's current debt - account #3090 - (approx.. \$167,000, which includes the Line of Credit)
- Disperse \$1000 to each of the Designated Funds (Worship & Arts, Leadership Development, Properties' Special Projects, Mission & Service, Community Life & Growth)
- Remainder (approx.\$330,000) to be invested in the InFaith Endowment Fund undesignated "sleeve," and named the "Stewart/Hindman Endowment"

Discussion. Dave noted that if Church Council passes this motion, it will need to be affirmed at the June or July congregational meeting. There is paperwork that needs to be finalized, this should be done by that meeting.

As a Motion coming from a Board, it needs no second. Motion passed.

Finance Report. Shirley reported. We are in pretty good shape financially, better than in recent Marches. 2020 Budget will be updated at summer congregational meeting. Shirley distributed all Boards' Income/Expenses to them, along with their budget. She and Dave are happy to help with the process of amending budgets, if needed. Kent expressed appreciation for the Boards' conscientious work, which has helped us navigate tough financial times.

Dave gave an update on the Transformation Fund, an anonymous donation of \$200,000 last year to help the church transform in ways to become more financially sustainable. \$53,000 has been spent on these 3 Church Council-approved areas:

- Social media & web development – had a kick-off meeting with web developers last week.
- Branding/Logo/ Communication - \$9000 left to spend, but we will likely not need it
- Upgrade of sound & video equipment – spent about \$17, \$18,000

Question - Does Church Council need to be asked to release more funds to be spent? No, not at this time. May reconsider at the summer congregational meeting. There are some hopes & dreams about audio equipment enhancements that may need to happen when we are in-person. Re: AV equipment – Properties is discussing a good way to secure our AV equipment to keep it both safe and easily available to AV crew. Dave, Rina and Jeff Hutton will talk about that. Rina is already inventorying.

What kind of staffing do we need in order to best communicate, now that community folks may be ready to come to church in-person – and what about those who are away but want to stay connected? Question – what has already percolated? From our Visioning regarding Communication and Spiritual/Pastoral Support -- regarding Pastoral Support – that could be enhanced with an additional position, increasing hours of part-timers, adding an Associate Pastor. Nobody knows what post-Covid syndrome will look like going forward and how it will affect Rev. Kent's health. What are obstacles to hiring an Associate Pastor? Basically, the same as we had when we hired Rachel – a sustained increase in income of about \$40,000 a year. We can't use all the Transformation Funds for that – it'd only get us about 3 years. If we can't generate a large enough base of givers to sustain that ... then what? We need to grow our base. Possible stop-gap: an intern. We are a good teaching congregation.

How will this discussion move forward? Unknown at this point. Maybe we can schedule a time of discussion at May meeting, seek input from every ministry, revisit 5-4-3-2-1 document. What is God calling and enabling us to do to steward this ministry?

Communication - Now that a new website is coming, we need someone to help us use all our tools – website, social media, generating graphics, etc. Kent reported that we currently utilize 13 means of communication and nobody uses them all, and nobody uses all the same ones. We need a plan, and a dedicated position.

For Discussion:

- **Re-Opening Survey.** Kent shared graphics, which are in the folder [2021-04](#). Short summary: about half of respondents are likely to be in person the majority of Sundays; another half likely to participate both online & in person. Nearly ALL respondents will be fully vaccinated by May 15. We have a small number that cannot or will not be vaccinated. Worship Board is making plans, feeling like people are ready to go back. Most important – people need to know what to expect. Admin Board is monitoring CDC guidelines. We will have people masked and socially distanced. Ushers will guide folks to seats and direct them as they leave. No in-building coffee hour for a while, but people can visit on the grounds. The plan is for an in-person service in some form on May 23, Pentecost.

Administration, Properties and Worship Board members & their families are invited to come in person this week (April 25) and will be asked for their impressions, suggestions, etc. Dave would like to be part of the discussion of logistics. Child care – not decided. Faith Development Board & Maria Hartz will be asked to check in with families and see what their desires are. What about communion? Several options – there is a product that's wafers and juice in individual small packets. This is a pretty unappealing option, esp due to waste. BYO communion elements? Bread on toothpicks? Kent is talking with colleagues. CL&G knows there are some people who are really desperate for some contact and are trying to help with that. BYO picnic on May 23 at Kent's. We can meet the new church dog! Discussion of Pride Month – June – focus of Justice Candle, worship service elements, picnic?

We've had a couple of requests from previous building users to come back & meet in person. We have given permission for Berea Home Village to use the Community Room in May for a 12-person meeting - following CDC guidelines. We've had good success with Bloodmobile. We can always plan to leave spaces unoccupied for 24 hours between groups. Cheryl stated that our big unknown right now is the variants. Will we be safe from those, even if vaccinated. Marty responded that the governor has said he will ease restrictions once 2.5 million Kentuckians are vaccinated BUT that – like the flu – Covid will always be with us. We will have to decide what our acceptable risks are. Discussion of filters in our HVAC system. Dave responded that we can keep the ventilation system on all the time to keep air moving.

Will we have a check-in process, taking temps? Likely not. BUT ushers can ask how people are feeling, are they having symptoms?

- **Members from Afar** Can we appoint a 3-person Task Force to explore this – both with a “voters” lens and a “participants” lens? Marty will serve, Jean Boyce also agreed – need an Admin member (Dave will talk with Lisa Vaughn, Admin chair). Marty will pull this group together and, if there are changes to Constitution or Bylaws suggested, that can go to the congregation this summer. Charlie Hoffman may be a good person to ask – he is having these discussions in a group he is part of. Rev. Kent proposed these questions as a starting point:
 - What is a member?
 - How do we include member responsibilities for remote folks?
 - What would joining look like in a video context?
 - What constitutional/legal adjustments might be needed?

Board Updates:

- Mission & Service – opportunities with Bread for the World Offering of Letters, Interfaith Power & Light have been shared. Blessing of the Urban Garden April 22, they are suggesting honorees for the Justice Candle and will take Amy's advice on Pride Month honorees.
- Nominating – CL&G is short at least one member, they are working on filling that position.
- Pastor's report – Sally Hindman having shoulder surgery; Tom Hubbard has moved to Dominion Memory Care; Robert Rorrer got the good news that his treatments are working and he's not feeling too badly; Carla is in touch with members and will be away several weeks helping her sister who's having a knee replaced. Concerns re: post-Covid syndrome. Kent is a month into a 4-month treatment protocol and asked all to be aware that there will likely be 20-30 million people with post-Covid symptoms, and those who were asymptomatic are the most likely

to be affected. Question – do we know how many church family members have had Covid? About a dozen that we know of.

- Announcements – send news & annc to Joan for Monday emails.

Funding requests will be considered in May. Bit of history: Church Council considers funding requests that are outside of Boards' budgets quarterly, in an attempt to keep everyone informed and seek other Boards' input. It's a way to prioritize spending & no request is denied, just may not be funded that go-round. Emergencies, of course, take precedence. In May, we'll consider 2 (thus far): paying for a special piece of music to be composed by Mark Hayes; and security cameras.

Next meeting May 17. Mary Lou will offer the devotional. Funding requests will next be considered in May.

Rev. Kent offered prayer to end the meeting.

Joan English