

Church Council Notes Union Church, June 21, 2021

Present: Joan English (Recorder), Dave Kobersmith (Staff), Marty Hensley (Finance), Doug Hindman (Worship), Carla Gilbert (church member), Kent Gilbert (Pastor), Thea (canine consultant), Kim Kobersmith (Nominating), Amy Schill (CL&G), Bob Boyce (Properties), Linda Parsons (clerk), Betty Hibler (M&S), Shirley Carlberg (Bookkeeper), Mary Lou Wiese (Nurture & Care), Chris Green (Pastoral Relations), Paul Smithson (Moderator)

A quorum was present. Our devotional was read by Carla Gilbert from the UCC Daily Devotional with a reference to Colossians 3:23 regarding blessing our workplace; Prayers asked for the Senate's vote on HR1 on voting rights, that it be a vote of conscience, not self-interest. Question of the Day – where were you born. Many states represented!

Action Items

Approval of May Minutes. Joan will try to do a bit of cleanup on the bits regarding sources of funding for security cameras and musical piece. Bob moved, Betty seconded that minutes be approved.

Membership Guidelines

Changes to constitution or bylaws for members who are not in Berea; issues of remote meetings. BL 6 addresses this. Proposed changes are in red proposed by ad hoc committee of Marty Hensley, Lisa Vaughn, Jean Boyce:

BL 6 Voting and Balloting: (rev. 12-14-03) Congregational action shall be taken by a majority vote of members ~~present in attendance~~, assuming a quorum, unless a higher number (e.g., two-thirds) is previously agreed upon. Voting shall be by secret written ballot whenever the Moderator thinks it appropriate, or upon the request of any member ~~present in attendance~~ at the meeting. **Secret ballots are only accepted from members physically present at the time of the vote.** Members who cannot be present are encouraged to submit statements articulating their views on motions to the Clerk, Moderator, or other member of the congregation. These statements will be read at the meeting. Neither absentee nor proxy ballots will be used.

The words “in attendance” makes it clearer that a person may be attending virtually - not necessarily in person. Regarding secret ballots: any member can request but there's no easy way to vote remotely in secret. Added the line: “Secret ballots are only accepted from members physically present at the time of the vote.”

Question of virtual membership addressed in Articles 2.3 and 2.5 of the Constitution. It is not an easy question. The group's hour-long discussion got complicated quickly. Also a question of voting privileges; and EVERY meeting of every board would have to be broadcast or held in such a way the remote members can vote.

This ad hoc group proposes doing 3 things regarding virtual membership:

1. Table this until Jan 1, 2022 to see what our virtual activity will look like in 6 months. We've already seen a dropoff in online viewership. Will this question be worth considering 6 months down the road?
2. Would like some focus groups of whole congregation to glean ideas of virtual membership. Too big an issue for 3 people, need broader range. Is anyone actually seeking virtual membership?
3. Is anyone actively seeking membership? If so, we will focus on BL 12, regarding Interpretation of Church Membership. If someone wants to become a virtual member in the next 6 months, the Moderator, Church Council chair, another member of Church Council and Kent will decide that particular issue on case-by-case basis; not binding to all cases.

Kim – shall we as a Church Council approve before these changes to BL6? Any questions/comments on BL 6?

Discussion

The issue of voting will matter in legal and procedural matters – perhaps as early as the July meeting.

Agreed on intent, the language is what we need to refine.

No second needed, as the alteration of BL 6 comes from a Board. Passed

Virtual Membership- discussion of Marty's 3 points. Do we need a whole congregation study? We do want to know if we have a need. We want to have a viable way to handle membership. Kent reported a couple of people expressed interest. If

we have a Covid resurgence, and need to lock down again, it's a smart idea to have a plan. It is wise to see what will happen in the next 6 months. If vaccination rate grows, it may well not be needed. We should percolate on this a little. The open meetings clause of Constitution complicates things as every meeting must be available for remote attendance. Membership creates onus on church to make all meetings available. What is appropriate way to make that possible? Give 24 hrs notice if someone want to attend remotely? Send Zoom link, whether or not people use it? People phone in and are on speaker? Within the last 2 weeks we added OWL that will make meetings different. Who knows what is coming?

Bob – could we raise the question in the bulletin - are you watching/participating virtually and would like to become a member of Union Church? We may not know if we don't ask. Announce that we have begun to think about welcoming virtual members? We don't know what the interest is. Maybe those persons might become Associate Members - and define that in the bulletin?

What does actual formal membership get you? You can be Chair of a Board and Vote at a congregational meeting. If you're donating, you probably want to vote. But there is a commitment to the person from the church, as well as from the person TO the church.

Anybody NOT ok with the plan presented?

1. Table this discussion until Jan 1, 2022
2. Form focus groups to glean ideas of virtual membership. That can begin now.
3. If someone wants to become a virtual member before our plan is formed, the Moderator, Church Council chair, another member of Church Council and Rev. Kent will decide that particular issue on case-by-case basis.

Decision about Constitution and Bylaws postponed til Jan. We can work on our process now. Kim affirms our comfort with the plan.

Church Council Meeting Format

In person, all virtual, hybrid? We have been using a 360 degree camera for classes. Sunday am; trying for Bible study. Works well, sound can be goofy. Working on settings. Who wants to go back in person? Seems like about half. For July – let's work out a hybrid plan.

Discussion

Finance Report. Shirley reported. We are doing well – at the end of May \$2500 to the good. We've received Lambert disbursement in June – what we expected - \$21,000 into budget, after 20% goes to the 5 Boards' standing funds and 20% to Endowment. Question - has that Lambert money been part of 2021 budget? Yes.

Review Revised Budget. Shirley asked Boards what they wanted in a revised budget. Nobody asked for less, some asked for relatively small increases. Original projection of budget voted upon in December was a deficit of \$21,000; now additions/reduction in interest on Line of Credit and interest on member loans have been calculated. If we use money from Hindman estate as planned in Finance Bd, our interest expense for '21 will be less by \$2000. With increased other line items based on what Boards asked for – now a net total of **\$25,000** projected deficit budget for 2021.

Comes from Finance Board, Church Council must approve. Question/concerns/thoughts? Dave clarified that we although we have a deficit budget now, we are \$2500 to the good as of 5/31. It's a projected deficit and may not end up that way. Shirley compared Budget vs. Actual expenses prorated budget to same point in the year where the expenses are, it implies that we should have a net deficit already of \$8827. Instead we have a net positive of \$2500, meaning we're basically \$10,000 ahead of where we thought we'd be. Is it that we are taking in more, or spending less. Answer: yes, both. We are not seeing major expenses.

Council affirms it is in favor of presenting this revised budget to congregation on July 25.

Paving the Parking Lot. Berea College is not paying all of it. Dave was quoted \$17,000 a year ago for OUR lot from C&R Asphalt, which is handling Berea College's Kettering lot. That \$17,000 would have increased to \$20,000 this year. Robert Rorrer & Dave checked a survey from 2011 and found the church's property line is very little of the asphalt. We have to pay \$13,700 instead of the \$20,000 we'd thought. Saved quite a bit of money, many thanks to Robert. Money is to come from Hutchins Fund (in May 2021, Council approved spending \$20,000). The work will happen around July 19. The Union Church Pond will be addressed – Berea College is fixing drainage at the handicap parking spot.

Several years ago a group called ABLE, led by Lauri McVicker, asked for a sidewalk in front of handicap ramp down to the basement door. C&R Asphalt also does concrete work & Dave got a verbal estimate of \$3500 to add that sidewalk. We would need to add handrailing at an extra expense. Staff's opinion is we should go ahead and do it. Discussion of elevator – whether inside or out. All agree that, while this is important, it is nearly unfeasible with our building being on multiple levels unless we added a “connector building” – it's not just a money issue.

Marty moved to approve change request adding the sidewalk up to the original \$20,000. If it looks to go over that amount, let's revisit. Paul seconded. Approved

Transition and New Staffing Discussion:

We are experiencing more pastoral needs as we open back, especially memorial services that have been put off. Are Boards feeling supported, what functions are we NOT covering? We're in the process of hiring a Program Associate to work with CL&G and FD, and Carla continues as Pastoral Associate. Kent's energy and capability are somewhat compromised due to long-haul Covid symptoms.

Kim – maybe let's wait til January 1 to address this issue as well. Will we still have these needs, will Kent have (hopefully) recovered?

Carla's job (Pastoral Care Associate) is 5 hours position per week; Program Associate is 5 hours per week. During the pandemic Maria focused on Faith Development part, not CL&G so 5 hours a week was workable. Both positions were cut back some time ago from 10 hours a week per due to budget, before the pandemic.

Bringing those positions back to 10 hours is 5 more hours than is budgeted for in 2020 but, realistically, the job cannot be done in 5 hours a week.

Discussion - Is one 20 hour position better than 2 10 hour positions? Likely not, it's 2 skill sets.

Do we want to vote? Shirley reminded us that Admin Board is responsible for Staff. No rep in attendance. It's not fair to change Admin's budget right now, with them not here. Can we get this conversation to Admin? Is Council willing to let Dave & Kent work with Admin to hammer it out? Bob: thinks our consensus is that 5 hours be added to both Program Associate and Pastoral Associate positions. Kent & Dave's amended job descriptions will be presented to Admin. then to Council. Consensus is to proceed.

54321 Review and Staffing Discussion - Communication Skill Set

Monies for this position will come from Transformation Fund, not budget. During our rebranding process we also worked with a communication consultant & Generis re: fundraising. During the year of quarantine we realized that we need the right communication going to the right people at the right time. We're good at a giant blast to everyone, good at some Facebook, some Instagram, some Twitter posting BUT we do not have anyone who looks at the metrics and knows what's working. For example: is a 4 pm post better for young families than a later pm post? We haven't got a staff person whose only job is to verify the database is clean and accurate, that the first time watchers get a thank you, 3rd time donor gets a note, etc. We have about 450 on the mailing list, our goal was to have been at 1000, we haven't been able to do that. A roadblock is partly that current staff is overwhelmed, plus we have been learning new Church Data Software.

Now we are in a position to make use of Transformation Fund. Proposed position would be a Communications/Member Relations person. Connecting dots between communication & stewardship, work with pastor to make sure events/news items – graphics are created, program support, who that info goes to. News to the right people in the right way at the right time, connect to ministries they care about. We are close to a job description. Kent envisions this to be a half-time job. The church's long-term financial health is more depending on getting 10,000 \$50 donations, rather than 50 \$10,000 donations. Need to have 5-6,000 on mailing list. We have the quality to attract a wider audience. How can we add additional worship opportunities that don't involve Kent working harder – podcast of sermon? Adding additional music? Second service maybe virtual in a relaxed format? EJ Stokes from Worship Board will be part of that conversation. Once we communicate with these new attendees, we have to keep track and make sure they are engaged and loved.

Dave – We have talked to financial consultant Steve McSwain & Mark McDonald – we definitely need a communications person. Dave believes if we do that well, we will grow. We can get to the point of having an associate pastor again.

Questions, comments?

Marty – it's a good idea – must have measurable realistic goals and a time frame. So in 6 months to a year (whatever we decide) we know if it's working. Kent wants to know how our communication affected our attendance at an event.

Bob – Admin should look at, build in a sense of how it has/has not worked. Need a job description. Then present to Council, then present ideas to congregation, more to invite open discussion than ask for approval.

Kim – All seem in favor of affirming this direction? Kent & Dave empowered to move forward

Coordination

Board Updates or Highlights

- M&S – spreading the word about the CoCoDA water project in El Salvador. They want to have whole congregation in on it. Paul talks with Jim Mulholland, executive director of CoCoDA. Wants to get together w/M&S to talk about plans
- Nominating – Rachel Lakes is now chair. Vacancies of CL&G, Admin, Mission
- Properties – will start Weds pulling wiring

Pastor's Report

Received the hard news that Heather Richardson died at UK Hospital of liver failure. We lost Barb Smith last weekend. Many of our folks have made the decision to relocate. Tom Hubbard is declining, strain on Dorie. The Stoltes made it safe to their new home. Jane Warth and the Shroyers are moving away from Berea.

Great news – we commissioned musical piece by Mark Hayes. First draft of lyrics is done. Will have the piece to us July 1. Dedicated to those whose memorial funds were used; and the first responders & medical folk who got us through the pandemic. In September we'll have a public hymn sing, invite other choirs.

Shared with Pastoral Relations Board – we do not know what's going on with long haul Covid. He is having constant symptoms but they vary. Looking at a long haul clinic in Louisville. Kent has spans of being able to manage a lot, then crashes. He will welcome help judging needs. His priority is Union Church's life and thriving.

Dave – Betty & Mary Lou part of a crew of 8-10 that did an unbelievable job of cleaning the kitchen. Thank you so much!!

Announcements

- Next scheduled consideration of Funding Requests – August, 2021
- Next Meeting July 19, Devotion: Bob Boyce

Shirley – Dave has his 10th anniversary at Union this month! There was much rejoicing!

Rev. Kent ended the meeting with prayer.

Joan English