

Church Council Notes Union Church, October 18, 2021

Present: Joan English (Recorder), Dave Kobersmith (Staff), Marty Hensley (Finance), Jennifer Melton (Worship), Carla Gilbert (church member), Kent Gilbert (Pastor), Kim Kobersmith (Nominating), David Jones (Staff), Amy Schill (CL&G), Linda Parsons (clerk), Jean Boyce (church member), Bob Boyce (Properties), Shirley Carlberg (Bookkeeper), Betty Hibler (Mission & Service), Mary Lou Wiese (Nurture & Care)

A quorum was present. Our devotional was read by Betty – a prayer written by Bishop Ken Untener as a celebration of the ministry of Oscar Romero: *A Step Along the Way*.

Question of the Day – share a fun Halloween costume you once wore.

Action Items

Marty moved, Betty seconded the motion that the September meeting minutes be approved, agreed by consensus.

Discussion

Finance Report. Shirley reported. We're currently \$14,000 to the good. Dave & Shirley reviewed the Budget vs. Actual Report for the year-to-date, and answered questions. At 75% of the year gone, we've taken in about 75% of the expected income, and expenses are at about 70% spent. Nothing unusual, but expenses are a bit down because we budgeted for things we aren't doing this fall.

Proposed 2022 budget. We've started paying back member loans w/interest, will finish up entirely in early '22. Stewart-Hindman funds are at the Bluegrass Community Foundation. The disbursement for 2021 is \$27,000, which is held in an equity account. (Proposed plan for this money's use will be addressed later in the meeting)

2022 Budget includes 6% COLA for all employees. Income is an unknown right now, but a good guess by Dave & Shirley, based on past years & adjusted by Finance Board.

VISA Rewards can be changed to \$500 or so (likely closer to \$850). Joan and Dave collected their Reward Points, which will put money back to their VISA accounts – all staff who have credit cards encouraged to do that too.

Unrestricted Special Gifts line: in 2021, it was the PPP loan that we didn't have to repay, going to the '21 budget.

Finance Board is recommending we use this year's Stewart-Hindman distribution (\$27,000) for the 2022 budget. This \$27,000 of investment earnings is in excess of the \$500,000 corpus, which was discussed, and its distribution decided, at the September Council meeting. This use goes against our Financial Policy which states Undesignated Bequests are supposed to be distributed thusly: 20% going to the 5 Standing Funds plus 20% to the Endowment Fund. The remaining 60% to be directed by Church Council. Council needs to make the decision whether or not to suspend the Financial Policy in this instance.

Kent asks Finance Board to be cautious in using this type of income (proceeds from investments or interest) as part of budget. Marty responded this is one-year thing, future Stewart-Hindman proceeds will go into Endowment Fund & be covered by the Endowment Policy. These proceeds will not be available again. "Bottom line" – even with the \$27,000 we are still \$41,000 in the red. Most Boards stayed pretty even in their requests. The big chunk of deficit is the COLA for all employees. That increase was recommended by Administration Board. Shirley didn't hear back from some Boards and her best guess is in the Budget. Mission is 7% of proceeds. Amy offered to give CL&G budget feedback. N&C is ok with lowered dollar amount, but may need to ask for more Special Care Resources if we have more receptions after memorial services.

Dave – talked with Lisa Vaughn, chairperson of Administration Board. Admin was suggesting the 6% COLA be discussed and put in the '22 budget, seeking Finance Board and Church Council's response, but is skeptical if we can afford the \$13,000 overall increase. Social Security proposes 5.9%, not 6%. We could save a little going with that. Kim asked for history of COLAs to staff. We have striven to do so, but have been unable every year. In the last 10 years,

probably only 2 that we haven't been able to. In 2020 staff was given an increase under the recommended COLA but Admin Board gave bonuses at the end of the year because we were in better financial shape.

Maybe offer lower COLA and reevaluate a few months into year.

Shirley – we have other options. If we end year with surplus – our policy is to give 10% to Mission Board equity account and 10% to endowment. That can be waived and the entire surplus can be put toward 2022 budget. There is also a Contingency Fund with \$6,000 in it. Shirley asked for direction from Council, not necessarily a vote. The Admin Board is doing a salary comparison. If supervisors want to adjust salary using that information, they are welcome to. But Admin will not make that suggestion. Dave reported that work is not yet done, but it will be passed on to Kent when it is.

Marty: this is where we are now – there's still time for recommendations and adjustments. Next month a vote will be needed so there is a budget to present to congregation.

Motion to use the Stewart-Hindman Union Church Fund (Dave gave some history on this, its proper name) for 2022 budget, waiving the Financial Policy requirement to pay 20% to the 5 Boards and 20% to the endowment. Marty so moved, Mary Lou second. It is understood that this use of an Undesignated Bequest is a deviation from Financial Policy. Motion passed unanimously.

Next piece: is there any concern, questions or suggestions to Finance on the 2022 budget?

If we took out all COLA, we'd still have about a roughly \$28,000 deficit. What was the projected deficit from this time last year? In 2020 we were about \$29,000 then whittled it down mid-year to about \$17,000 came to the good by \$355. We try to keep it to about 5% deficit.

Bob – it's our intention that the COLA should be there. Push-comes-to-shove, in October '22 if we aren't there, then every Board shares the hit. By proposing this budget we state our intention to grant a 6% COLA. Mary Lou agreed it is a moral imperative.

Marty– we do have \$\$ sitting in accounts to cover shortfall if necessary. BUT it won't take long to deplete it if we think this way every year. Consensus is to leave the COLA in. Last year at this time we were only \$7000 to the good (now it's \$14,000).

Congregational Meeting will be December 12, 3 pm. Reminder: we need to announce meeting date 4 Sundays in advance, and share the budget one week before meeting.

From last month – how can we build community with small groups Nurture & Care booklet Harvest Booklet to go out – to remind people of our loving community. Discussions about various ways to get fellowship into our lives -- CL&G – Fall Picnic & Vespers Service with s'mores and costumes. Book Studies have been well received, inc. a new college group started by David. Other opportunities (spiritual practices, projects, Mission Outreach) may be generated for Advent. We'll discuss that further next month & see if any collaborations come up.

Re-opening plans & benchmarks. Good news – Covid numbers are declining; except deaths, which always trail. Madison County still Red Zone, at 45 cases per 100,000. Orange Zone is 25 per 100,000. We are down from last week, the number is continuing to drop. Kent affirmed Marty's projection last month that we won't likely have a significant drop til mid-November. Orange Zone around the beginning of November is a good possibility. We'll stay closed & online only for sure through October 31st. We'd want to be in the Orange Zone for 2 weeks in a row before we come back in person (masked). We're trying to avoid ping-ponging – we'd want to open and stay open. If at all possible, would want to be back hybrid by Advent. In the Yellow Zone, we can come back without masks. Discussion of other churches and if they have generated clusters of infection. Unknown because Delta made contact tracing impossible.

Kim –do we need a Task Force to study and plan? Kent reported there is a lot of info available regarding “large gatherings” but we know most of it: wear a mask, stay distant, get vaccinated. It's become too political to discuss churches as a category. Health Department is asked to use the language “large gatherings.” We have air purifiers. We're lucky that the sanctuary is huge. We also have a good online worship experience, so our crowds may stay small. We also have to hope for no new variant. Would it be helpful to have a task force that looks at practices as the Zone colors change? Yes, Admin has good info, and we have our May experience too. Kent, Kim, Jennifer, Marty will confer. Kim welcomes questions and resources.

The really hard decision is choir. How much risk do people want to take, and how much moral responsibility do we want to take? Question – can the choir spread 6 feet apart on the balcony? Unfortunately, that lets droplets fall right on to the congregation.

Adding new Board for Stephen Ministry. The concern is that Stephen Ministry have a seat at the table. Marty's idea to stipulate at least one Stephen Minister on Nurture & Care Board – that should take care of it. How to assure that? Can it be a Nominating Board policy? Yes. Dave – we can add that stipulation to the Constitution where Boards are defined. Bylaws might be a better place, since Stephen Ministry is a program. It may end, change name, something better might come along. Bylaws is a step between a Policy and the Constitution change. If it's a Nominating Board policy, it may not survive from one Board composition to the next. Should we add this to any updates we plan for Bylaws and Constitution? Yes, we can vote upon this in December.

Membership for remote members – nothing to report

Staffing Report – nursery & communication person. One former nursery person wants to come back, no report on communication. Hopefully that position will help us close the \$41,000 gap – effective communications connect heart, ministry, God's call, sustainability of church.

Board Updates or Highlights

- Admin –
- CL&G - Sue Peterson Blyth will join; working on October 30 event; Sunday morning Zoom Coffee Hours are going well
- Faith Development – connected with Maria Hartz on curriculum; 3 Zoom groups on See No Stranger; College Group on Weds. Planning their next Zoom group. Will start seeking volunteers. Kent would like to have David have a weekly video spot in the worship service so all can get to know him
- M&S – has lost 2 members – Dorie and Annriette. Dorie has moved to Kenwood, likely permanently, and Tom will join her. Annriette needs to leave the Board. Dorothy Chao is meeting with them ad hoc and would like to formally join. Mission is becoming more involved with Sustainable Berea, working with Cheyenne Olson. What are plans for sale, refugee resettlement. We will get lists of needed items from KY Refugee Ministries – they don't have room for things to store. Hubbards' house available for storage short-term
- Nominating – openings in FD and Admin
- N&C
- Properties
- Worship
- Finance – Endowment Committee – needs a Church Council representative. Ellen is no longer on Church Council, so cannot serve on Endowment Committee. Mary Lou volunteered, all affirmed.

Pastor's Report no particular change in his health. Has had a couple of good days recently. Started planning for Advent with the worship planning team -- whether we are hybrid or not. Homecoming cancelled in-person activities for mid-November. No decision about Christmas Concert, but it's likely to be a virtual event. We are trying to figure out parking. After the new dorm was completed, we've had an uptick in the number of spaces, bad news – they're filled with students. Kent expressed gratitude for the Worship Team – Jennifer and several lay members, inc Don Cardwell, who think about themes & select Calls, Images, Poetry. Others are welcome to join the group.

Announcements

- News items
- Next scheduled consideration of Funding Requests – November, 2021
- Next Meeting November 15, Devotion: Jennifer

Rev. Kent offered prayer to end the meeting.

Meeting ended at 8:45

Joan English