**Church Council Minutes Union Church, September 18, 2023**

**Present:** Joan English (Recorder), Dave Kobersmith (Staff), Kim Kobersmith (Vice Moderator), Kent Gilbert (Pastor), David Jones (FD & CL&G Staff), Jeff Hutton (Properties), Charles Hoffman (Finance), Steve Gowler (Moderator), Betty Sarafin (CL&G); Carla Gilbert (M&S, Staff); Jennifer Melton (Worship); Donna Lovell (Admin); Steve Bolster (Pastoral Relations); Linda Parsons (Clerk)

Steve offered our devotional - some reflections on Kent’s 9-17 sermon, and The Curse of Cain and the book of Amos, and closed with a poem in praise of diversity. Gerard Manley Hopkins, [*Pied Beauty*](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44399/pied-beauty).

**Question of the evening:** What’s one thing you look forward to in autumn?

**Action Items**

**Minutes:** Approval of August minutes. Joan will correct a typo on the name of the new Berea College president. Charlie moved to approve, Steve Gowler seconded, minutes approved.

**Proposed Transformation Fund expenses (line item 3050).** Bit of history -- we received a $200,000 grant in 2020, which Church Council voted to call Transformation Fund. It’s been used for sanctuary improvements (inc. sound booth), audio visual equipment & training, our branding project & there’s about $84,000 left in fund. The proposal is for approval of 2 projects using these funds.

* **Audio Visual Expense** – Thanks to Rina Tanaka, our Video Production Manager, we had an intern, Olivia Puckett, who worked a year for us for credit at EKU. Rina put together a great proposal to hire her, since we are ramping up with more events, including Berea College concerts, more need for tech on Sundays, weddings, memorial services. Rina would be her supervisor, and reports that Olivia quickly learned our upgraded equipment, is detail oriented, and has excellent communication skills. This proposal for 6-8 hours a week. Cost is about $3000 for the rest of the year, including a small grant to pay Olivia back to July 1. We will build her pay into the budget for 2024, up to $3000
* **Increased our outward presence in the community** – we’ve been spending on banners for special events, replacing some, adding others for regular events and info. We are telling people who we are, and we have more yet to do. We used $500 from CL&G (#6521) and have spent considerably more. This funding request will return that $500 to CL&G for past expenditures from #3050. Also the work with Jeff Hensley, financial consultant, has suggested other expenses – inc. research for direct mailings, and would like to do that project a bit later in the fall. Requesting approval for up to $3000 for banners and other 100th anniversary expenses.

**Charlie moved Church Council approve both, Jennifer seconded. Kent asked that we take a moment to feel gratitude for this generosity! Vote: approved unanimously!**

**Discussion**

**Finance Report:** Charlie reported. Finance Board met as usual and reviewed August reports. August saw a larger deficit of $8294, about $36,419 for year. We’re in very odd, and uncharted territory financially. Our usual patterns have changed and are not predictable. We are not taking in as much as we are spending. This may not be solved by cutting/slashing budgets.

**Line item:** Question from Charlie -- Weds night meals – how is the food being paid for? Deb Beishline is cooking amazing meals and showing amazing thrift – under $3 a person, with leftovers being used for following meals. Kent responded – funding currently is cobbled together from a variety of sources. Some from the grant that we’ve gotten; another grant is due in 2 weeks; some from Special Projects Fund; Youth Group may contribute some as they have in years past; and the hope is we can see some contributions from diners as well. Last week, the meal took in $87 in donations, which nearly covered all the cost. We are currently in the investment phase and hoping that those who can afford are donating some; and building attendance hoping to see future gains. Charlie remarked on the great energy and attendance; not to mention the wonderful quality of the meals. Kent & David Jones are keeping their ears open for leads on partnerships which might allow us to collaborate and reduce costs. Betty was a bit discouraged with early attendance, but it’s growing to 30, 35. She, David and Pamela were recruiting students and many came the first week, but not the second week (pointed out that there was a special event on campus that evening). Kent reminded everyone that it takes a while to build a pattern. It will take a year to build this pattern and get into routine. We are learning and building. Thanks to Betty for all the work! This week (21st) will be the 4th weekly dinner.

**Kim –** question for Finance – any tweaks planned to the budgetary process, based on this deficit? What about a budget worksheet – what we budgeted; what are your needs; let’s assume you have to cut in half – what would that look like? What would you cut and what would be most important? Kent and Dave are having weekly meetings with our financial consultant, actively working on fall campaign and planning for future generosity. They’re planning an intentional, interesting, positive campaign this fall, then one in the spring. Don’t want to nickel & dime people, but want to plan for -- outreach ministries, retaining the staff, whom we appreciate, fund ministry that we value. The consultant was optimistic and sees lots of untapped resources. He believes there is some growth to be had. If we can get boards to do their planning sooner, Church Council is the place we can discuss, deliberate and distill. This is a good thought exercise but also realistic. Jennifer hopes that, as we explain what we want the Boards to do with their budgeting process, can we be positive and tell the story that the ship is not sinking. What we are doing in the community with Open Table will bless us, whether or not it makes us money.

**Congregational Budget Meeting set for** Dec. 6 Weds; 6:30

**Coordination**

**Board Updates or Highlights**

* Building Celebration –
* Admin -
* CL&G -
* FD – hired an additional nursery person so we have 2, and Cadence can help. Nursery is open
* Finance -
* M&S – bring items by Oct. 2 for auction to benefit RITI. Their fundraiser auction begins Oct. 18
* Nominating –
* N&C – Doug’s service is Oct. 7, followed by a reception. Berea College is catering; Rhonda & Carla are on it too.
* PRB –
* Properties – moving ahead with changes & repairs to playground. Shooting for next couple months. Moving fence, putting down wood chips, repairing stairs on climbing tower, remove dangerous swings
* Worship –
* CL&G –
* Endowment –

**Pastor’s Report** This Sunday is our 100th anniversary of the sanctuary/community room building. Thank you to Donna Lovell, for designing banners and finding great historical photos and more! She and Kim have been the driving forces behind the event. We have new outside and inside banners, please share the Facebook post to amplify reach. The event is 2-5 pm Sunday, Berea College president and Mayor Fraley will come, there will be info stations, tour guides, chocolate treat fundraiser. If you get a passport stamp on all 8 stations you get a candy bar; or buy one for $5. In the morning we will honor the past, looking to the1922 worship service; and afternoon is the future. Tables will be set up for all the boards with their projects & accomplishments. The hope is that this is a good invitation for folks to get inside the building so it gets to feel familiar; and we can share what was birthed in this space. Kent has been made aware that the vast majority of Berea people know 0 about our history, that there was not a Berea before Union. We used to play a role in Berea College events – opening convo and baccalaureate, but since Covid we have not. Newer faculty doesn’t know us and are not connected with this story.

**Pastoral care** – We’ve had 2 sad losses recently: Dough Hindman and Tom Parker. We welcomed 2 new members Sunday and 2 more are interested. We’re nowhere close to pre-pandemic numbers on Sunday mornings. Hoping to see numbers back as new vaccine rolls out. There was under 50 in attendance on Sunday the 17th. Working toward World Communion Sunday Oct. 1 with First Christian Church.

**Announcements**

* Next scheduled consideration of Funding Requests – November, 2023
* Next Meeting Oct. 16.  Devotion: Carla

 Meeting ended with prayer by Rev. Kent.

Joan English