

St. Mark's United Methodist Church

Guiding Council Meeting Minutes

June 19, 2023—6:30 pm—Zoom Teleconference

Members Present:

Administration: Sarah Vaughan, Betty Schiele
SPRC: David Harmon, Julie Marshall, Andrew Crisp
Trustees: Rob Heare, Matt West, Laura Godwin
Finance: Kitty Ambers, Chris Franklin
Lay Leadership: Lynne Kelly, Jon Ryan

Non-voting:

Administration: Rebecca Harmon
Secretary: Dani Corrigan

Staff present: Justin White, Kelly Chin, Hannah Hopper

CALL TO ORDER (6:30)

Sarah Vaughan called the meeting to order and conducted roll call.

DEVOTION and OPENING PRAYER (6:30)– Rebecca Harmon

The morning after the last Guiding Council meeting, Rebecca was driving to work listening to her Christian playlist as background music. She always listens on shuffle, and it often serves as background music. The song “Dawn” by Hillsong came on which is a very gentle melody. In the full album, *Awake*, “Dawn” is the first song and the ending instrumental leads right into the next song, “Awake My Soul.” She is normally disappointed because “Awake My Soul” does not follow. This morning the two songs followed each other, she almost didn’t believe it when they played in the correct order while on shuffle. This was a “don’t knock the squirrel moment” that Teresa shared about in her devotion last month. Rebecca’s take away is that God’s is everywhere all the time, and he is constantly sending us message of love. Be aware of God’s messages of love that are all around us all the time. She included the link to the YouTube of the album in the chat.

PRAISES (6:34)

- Laura shared that Betty was at church on Sunday. Betty shared she is out of her sling now with some movement limitations. She is sleeping better without the sling.
- Sarah praised that Justin and Rebecca survived to Annual Conference. Aidan Vaughan was a district youth delegate. He shared good insights and represented the church and his family well. Sarah said he was very tired after he returned.

MINUTES (6:36)

The minutes for May 15, 2023, were reviewed.

Justin motioned to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Lynne and was approved unanimously.

FINANCE (6:37): Reports in Google Docs

Kitty Ambers informed:

- We continue to have very positive outcomes.
- Balance Sheet Items:
 - Total Current Assets: \$334,567.00
 - Total Assets: \$2,044,881.00
 - Liabilities are largely around mortgage balance: Around \$1,015,893.00
 - Designated Giving Funds: \$43,113.00. This fluctuates as funds get posted from Breeze.
 - Total Liabilities: \$1,315,205.00
 - Equity: \$729,676.00
 - Total Liabilities and Equity: \$2,044,881.00
- May Monthly Highlights
 - Total income was \$66,451.00 which is \$8,933.00 ahead of budget for the month.
 - May offerings were \$60,136.00 which is \$6,595.00 ahead of budget.
 - Preschool donations caught up from April. Both April and May are included.
 - Rental income is favorable even with gym floor under construction. It has been timed that it does not disturb rental income.
 - Total expenses for the month were \$50,443.00, which is below budget by \$2,110.00. Areas with variants include staff parish expenses reduction to health insurance items and there was no overtime budgeted for. Building and Grounds were below budget again. Youth budget was a little over, but this is for missions and retreats preparation. Administrative expenses were below budget and everything else was either at or below budget.
 - Net ordinary income for the month was \$16,008.00 which is \$11,043.00 ahead of budget for the month.
 - With other income and other expenses adjustment total income for the month is \$21,145.00, which is about \$11,000.00 ahead of budget. Very positive for May.
- YTD Highlights
 - Total income YTD is \$25,302.00 better than budget and \$43,331.00 better than last year.
 - Expenses YTD are under budget by \$7,316.00.
 - Net income (Jan-May 2023) is \$80,125.00 which is \$33,192.00 better than budget.
- Capital Funds Activity:
 - Busy this past month with James River Air, classroom carpeting, front office carpeting, and CLC flooring material. Transferred \$41,000.00 from Reserves to cover these expenses.
 - Current balance: \$98,920.04
 - We received some additional income this month, just shy of \$20,000.00. We have received about 58% of pledged amount so far.
- Reserve Activity:
 - Balance at end of May: \$148,547.90. This is a combination of cash and \$75,000 in CDs.
- Kitty opened the floor for Kelly to comment.
 - The \$41,000.00 from reserves to Capital Campaign. The total covers Justin's request that at least \$10,000.00 be left for both HVAC/maintenance and Reserves. These are for

future expenses. Capital Campaign money that comes in will be designated into the “buckets” with 55% going to the mortgage and everything else will filter back down to build reserves back up.

- Justin said everyone can ask questions but, so far praise the Lord, all of this is working out as planned.
- Email Kelly if you have any questions.

TRUSTEES (6:45)- Report in Google Docs

Rob Heare informed:

- Trustees are not asking for money this month but looking to future expenses in the Fall.
- The CLC is starting to look like a floor again. There were some holdups but it is coming together nicely. It will all work out.
- Stacy and Hannah are working on getting new signage at church. They are currently talking to someone. Trustees are still working on handicap signage.
- FACES house repairs have been shelved because of expenses and priorities. We will still need to look at the deck.
- Three items lumped together include inhouse security, replacing wooden doors and church security. The Trustees met with John from Security, Julie from Preschool, Banks from Maintenance team to talk about these three items. It impacts all of us. It is very expensive. The inhouse security piece is there are “dead zones” within the church impacting security team ability to contact people. There is an estimate \$1,250.00 to fix this. She is going to contact a company she is working with to put microphones in the classrooms regarding fixing these “dead zones.” They will compare these two estimates.
- Some doors need to be replaced. When you walk out of the sanctuary there is a row of doors that need to be replaced, a preschool door, and volunteer room. Initial estimate to replace six doors is \$23,000.00. There is a company coming tomorrow for a second estimate and see what it would cost just to replace part of the doors.
- Estimate for security system for \$13,000.00. Will put together a plan, a time frame, and how we will pay for this. Once this is done Rob will present this to the council. It will be about \$40,000.00 to do everything that needs to be done. We are about to pay \$135,000.00 for CLC floor.
- Justin added we will have to wait a few months to let the Capital Campaign funds recover. We will have to prioritize the worst doors. The preschool one is the worst. Priority is ensuring the basement and the dining room have communication if there is an emergency. This is all part of the plan, but it makes us nervous to spend money.
- Rebecca asked for clarification on the four doors. Hannah said it is Door 10 which is right outside the sanctuary. The one on the far right if facing from inside does not always lock. It is not secure. If we replace one then we would need to do all of them to match. It is \$4,000 a door. One option would be to blank it out so it wouldn’t need to lock. There are plans to re-key the whole building. This has never been done. There are a lot of keys out there. If re-keying these doors this may be a priority over these four doors. Keys are \$28 a key. The preschool door is on the main one of the school and Door 11 is volunteer office door is rotting off. Door 10 is four separate doors. Laura added that from a structural standpoint, Door 11 is rotting off the hinges. From a security

standpoint, the preschool door is the biggest priority for safety and needs to have security with DSS to remain religiously exempt.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE(6:55)

Rebecca Harmon informed:

- There are a mix of moments where you feel the presence of God and then there are some boring moments. It is a business meeting. There is a large book of reports that is one hundred plus pages. The Book of Reports, the Official Packet and the Official Conference website are linked.
- People give reports then everyone votes on it. We are continuing to do good things for people. It is beautiful to hear where our apportionments go. So many good things we are supporting in the state, nationally, world and Justin's pension.
- The Christmas Covenant is a new proposal that will be voted on at the General Conference in April 2024 in Charlotte, NC. The General Conference is delegates from around the world that meet every four years. The proposal for the Christmas Covenant would allow for regional divisions. For example, US would be their own, Philippines, multiple areas for Africa, and multiple areas for Europe. One main reason for this is pensions. This is litigious for the US but does not impact the other areas outside of the USA. Philippines have a large indigenous culture, so seminary is not a direct path as it is in the USA. This would also allow for conversation and decisions with LGBT that differ in different regions.
- The conversations were respectful. Sue Hauptert-Johnson moderated the conversation about the Christmas Covenant to include both pros and cons. The delegates from the Virginia were overwhelming in favor of Christmas Covenant. It appeared they were planning to vote for it at General Conference but wanted approval from Annual Conference. When they come back from General Conference the Annual Conference must pass this by 2/3 vote to ratify it.
- Rebecca recommends reading the FAQs link from Annual Conference and if you want to read more for General Conference for 2024 link.
- Justin added the Annual Conference wanted to make sure it was a direction that was supported. If General Conference makes changes, then there will be constitution amendments to ratify.
- Sarah asked what the negatives to Christmas Covenant were. Justin said it will allow LGBTQ to change in USA where in other countries people will be kill when talking about it. If people are against LGBTQ, then the Christmas Covenant would make it easier to make a change. Rebecca reports people argued that we should be "united" and not broken into smaller chunks. There are a number of other countries that already have this. This would give the US the same regional. Justin said unity does not be unanimity. We care still be connected and have differing rules.
- Rebecca said there were a good number of people who were opposed to it, but the vote was overwhelmingly in favor. There was another vote that was close, and they actually had to vote again so they could ensure the voting numbers were correct.

VISION COUNCIL (7:08) Report in Google Docs

Rebecca Harmon informed:

- Youth Sunday was a huge success. Selina and Stacy did a great job preparing the youth.
- The Cracked Pots is a group coming together this weekend. They are a group meeting to complete small projects around the church. It is an opportunity for friendship and fellowship.

- New Women's groups will be meeting soon.
- The Parables of Talents are posted on a bulletin board.
- People have voiced they are not aware of happenings at the church. Vision Council has been brainstorming how to update the bulletin board space. The week following the VC meeting Stacy has already updated a bulletin board with upcoming missions. We cannot overcommunicate but it should be different and varied. Not all members are looking at "This Week at St. Marks." There are fliers on postcards. VC is continuously working on communication and reaching out to folks with everything going on.
- Working on ways to connect outside of church as friendships as discipleships which comes through interacting. Some ideas include Hardywood Brewery or a Flying Squirrels baseball game.
- Flat Jesus is back. Rebecca forgot to take a picture of Flat Jesus at Annual Conference. Justin said Rachel got a picture of Flat Jesus on his way.
- St. Mark's Preschool's 50th anniversary is coming up.
- VBS is up and running.
- Come to the Farmer's Market on Saturdays.
- Youth mission trip is coming up.
- Requests: Reach out to Pastor Rachel if you want to organize an event. She will help to arrange the timing so there is not an overlap. Always need volunteers for Sunday school.

Hannah and Kelly left the meeting (7:12)

SPR (7:13)- reports in Google Docs

Julie Marshall informed:

- SPR is working on revisions to the handbook. If there are any substantial changes they will be brought to GC for a vote.
- Pastor evals for Pastor Justin and Pastor Rachel were turned in prior to June 1 deadline.

Deciding

- Justin has decided on renewal leave for September 5-30. This will be four Sundays. Julie, Rebecca and two by Rachel Chen will cover these Sundays. He will return October 1 for the next meal packing event.
- Julie motioned for Justin's Renewal Leave from September 5, 2023 through September 30, 2023. The motion was approved unanimously.

Justin White informed:

- The staff had a wonderful Staff Day Away last Monday. They focused on Strength Finders which is based on Gallup data. There is a book *Living Your Strengths* which puts a focus on spiritual gifts. Rev. Josh Extrum came to lead through Strength Finders work. Then they went out to lunch. This week the staff meeting will focus on how they will share their strength with their ministry teams.
- Julie added SPR is looking to have a staff appreciation lunch in August. The United Methodist Men are taking a vote on hosting. Julie will share more next month.

DISAFFILIATION (7:17)

Justin White informed:

- Disaffiliation is the process where churches that are more conservative, especially with LGBTQ issues, have the opportunity to leave the denomination this past year. It ties closely to the Christmas Covenant idea.
- We have had or will have about 10% of churches in Virginia will leave the congregation by the end of the year. There have been individual conversations regarding this. Justin feels it may be time for communication with the church regarding this. Several people have reached out to Justin and Rachel seeking more information. There is a lot of information and disinformation. One example includes someone being told they would no longer be preaching from the Bible in worship. Justin is recommending sending some kind of communication such as an email to the church after Annual Conference. Justin has a draft and wants to hear thoughts from GC regarding communication. Communication would say that we do not feel disaffiliation is the right thing for St. Mark's that we want to focus on our ministry and missions. He opened the floor if anyone had ideas or had heard any misinformation.
- Julie reports attending an ordination recently at a Methodist church and was discussing disaffiliation. If the church leaves the denomination, then the pastor does not have to worry about being transferred to another church later. Julie questioned if this being an important thing. Justin has heard from other churches with pastors pushing their church to leave so they can stay but this is not a high priority.
- Betty attended three Zoom disaffiliation meetings. The first one made it clear why the churches were leaving. Some were leaving to be independent, and some were closing. When looking at 10% about 2% were leaving for other reasons. She agrees it is time to send something out to clarify. She suggested a mailing in addition to email for people who do not use email.
- Rebecca suggested a formal letter that may include disaffiliation as well as including review of Capital Campaign what we have achieved.
- Rob has also been approached and feels it is a lack of information. He agrees with a formal letter. He said the more information that can be provided will be better including FAQs. Someone asked if the church was keeping it a secret. Perception is 90% reality.
- Laura cautioned from using language that we had discussed this and decided against it. The minutes are public. We have not had much discussion. The discussion has been that we are not forced to decide then we want to spend our time on our community and our ministry. We do not want to spend time going down his rabbit hole. This is for churches that are frustrated and ready to leave. We landed here because we have other priorities.
- Lynne added that we have been discussing this in Guiding Council for four years. The discussions began around General Conference coming up and what was going on. The protocol went away. A year ago, this came back up and had another discussion regarding questions that Mark had everyone answer including the cost of disaffiliation.
- Laura reports its more semantics that GC has been informed not that we voted. Betty said the vote would not be from GC. Justin reports the vote would have to go through Charge Conference. Someone would have to bring it as a vote to Charge Conference and that would likely be brought from the body of Guiding Council.
- Sarah asked if it must come to the church as a vote. Justin said you never have to vote to stay United Methodist. There are some churches that this has never come up.

- Justin has a draft. He has thought about adding links to FAQs and Rebecca's annual conference report. He will send out the draft to Guiding Council this week.

CLOSING PRAYER AND ADJOURNMENT

Justin closed with a prayer. Sarah adjourned the meeting at 7:29 PM.

Next Meeting: July 17, 2023, at 6:30 PM on Zoom.