

Church Council Minutes

November 21, 2022

In attendance via Zoom: Lisa Hanrahan, Alex Joyner, John Sykes, Frank McMullen, Bill Clarke, Evelyn Kessler, Guy Moffatt, Charles Kidd, Hu Shaffer, Jeff Taylor, Cindy Remington, Jim Berlin, Lisa Mann.

As Bill Clarke is stepping down as Lay Leader, he offered a "Last Lecture" devotional based on Mark 12: 30-31. He suggested we strive to "stop, look, and listen" in our daily lives, acknowledging that God is love, recognizing what consumes our time, and considering possibilities for change.

Finance Chair Jeff Taylor presented a summary of revenue and expenses as of October. He noted that that year-to-date giving is \$38K below budget after receiving a \$24K estate bequest. Other income is \$22K higher than budget due to receiving \$35K from endowment earlier than budgeted and accounting for a pastor salary adjustment received from the District. Expenses are \$10K below budget as payments for outreach programs were not paid until November. Resulting net income is \$6K less than budget. Variances from prior year were primarily due to one-time events occurring in 2021.

Jeff then presented a summary of the 2023 budget approved by the Finance Committee. Budgeted revenue is \$16K above current year and budgeted expenses are \$22K above current year. Pledged giving from Consecration Sunday is 13% higher than last year, but there is a possibility that some contributions were converted from unpledged to pledged giving. Alex asked for clarification that pledged giving as reported is only for First Church; Hinton Avenue pledges were collected separately.

Bill made a motion to approve the budget as submitted. Cindy seconded, and the motion passed.

Frank suggested that a clarification of how spending is funded from both endowments and congregational giving be put into the mid-week update. A summary of spending for ministries both within and outside of the church could be included as well. Cindy advised that this year's Advent offering will support our Bread and Blessings Soup Kitchen. Jeff noted that there is approximately \$12K sitting in accounts designated for "downtown ministries". Jim stated that we should use those funds for ministry rather than let sit. Alex suggested that we should evaluate ministry options and develop a plan for use of the funds.

Jim Berlin has been nominated to replace Jim Campbell as chair of the SPRC. Cindy made a motion to approve the nomination of Jim as chair, Evelyn seconded, and the motion passed.

Evelyn requested that council approve up to \$75K from the Thomas Bequest for updating sanctuary audio-visual equipment to improve internet presentation. John noted that any modifications to the sanctuary need to be approved by the Trustees in concert with architect Bill Owens.

Jeff made a motion to authorize spending up to \$75K from the Thomas Bequest for AV improvements, contingent on prior approval of the proposal by the Trustees. Frank seconded, and the motion carried.

Alex then led a discussion of potential merger with Hinton Avenue United Methodist. Questions were raised about name of new congregation, assumption of debt, building repairs, disposal of assets, and Rachel's Haven project. Alex explained that Hinton Avenue recognizes going back to operating as a separate congregation is not a viable option. There are assets that could be sold or donated, but any plan has to be approved by the District. There is no outstanding debt; however, the church building

needs major repairs. Piedmont Housing Alliance is only interested in continuing to partner in the Rachel's Haven project if they can get the entire site, not just a portion.

Alex recommended that a committee of 4 persons, 2 each from FUMC and HAUMC, form to produce a merger document to present to Church Conference in early January. Bill suggested Paige Lindblom, our new Lay Leader, as one member; Jeff Taylor volunteered to be the other. Hinton Avenue has named its two members.

Evelyn brought up Trustees' request to renew the agreement to transfer \$20K per year to the Trustees' contingency fund. Bill made a motion to renew the agreement to transfer \$20K per year for 5 years to the Trustees' contingency fund from either the Thomas Bequest, Conway Bequest, or undesignated funds. Jeff seconded, and the motion passed.

Evelyn noted that she has developed a spreadsheet that could be included in the "Focus" outlining how endowment funds have been used over time.

Lisa Hanrahan adjourned the meeting at 8:11 PM.

Submitted by Lisa Mann

2021 and \$27K below budget. He reminded us that there were gifts in 2018 – 2020 that will not be recurring; if giving continues at this level, we will have a reduction in operating cash unless we use additional funds from the Arthur gift. Lisa Hanrahan asked about plans/ideas for 2023. Jeff responded that the plan is to start our giving campaign earlier this year, and to be more intentional leading to Consecration Sunday. Jim Campbell asked that someone verify that the subsidy toward Alex's salary was actually received from the conference. Cindy asked if work areas need to trim their budget requests for 2023. Jeff answered that the 2022 budget anticipated growth in attendance and hope that increased giving would follow. If giving for 2023 tracks with 2022, we would expect a \$60K - \$80K deficit that would have to be made up with endowment funds. Frank commented that we need to emphasize the positive things the church is doing as we move into our giving campaign.

Evelyn Kessler reported on behalf of the Endowment Committee, noting that \$35K was distributed toward operating funds and that values of the investments have increased in the past month.

Speaking on behalf of the Ministry Council, Cindy Remington explained there is no Worship Chairperson and no Outreach Chairperson at present. She also reported that Dave Breslin and others met to discuss the possibility of taking an Appalachian Service Project trip in the summer of 2023.

Jim Campbell gave an update from Staff Parish Relations. The committee is working on a final draft of an employee handbook. An interview is scheduled for a Children's Coordinator; Jim commented that even though a significant number of people responded to the congregational survey that they have a skill/interest in teaching, no one from the congregation expressed an interest in the Children's Coordinator position.

John Sykes presented a report on the work of the Trustees. Removal of lead paint has been delayed due to weather. Church security has become an issue in the last several months; the committee has added more motion detectors, will put deadbolts on rooms on the third floor and is installing exterior cameras. An anonymous donor has offered to make a \$100K contribution toward a solar energy project. Additional funds could come from member contributions or potential government subsidy to nonprofit organizations. Guy Moffat explained that a local company was brought in to evaluate options, keeping in mind restrictions by the City Board of Architectural Review. Their recommendation was to install 220 solar panels at a cost of \$200K, generating a savings of approximately \$19K per year in energy costs. Cindy expressed that the Ministry Council would like to advocate for the project. Frank made a motion that Church Council allow Trustees to move forward on the project and commit \$200K. Bill amended the motion to allow \$100K to be borrowed from the Thomas Bequest and then repaid. Cindy seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Jim asked about progress on hiring a security guard. John responded that the Trustees are still researching options but have made no progress with local companies.

Lisa Hanrahan scheduled next meeting for October 3.

Alex closed the meeting with prayer.