

# APPROVED January 2023 Mid-Year Congregational Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2023

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1. *Call to Order* – Church Council Moderator Peter Mueller called the meeting to order at 11:30 am. There were 54 in-person participants and 9 participants via Zoom video conference. Council Members were introduced. A slide presentation began with a review of today’s agenda.
2. *Welcome and Prayer* – Pastor Sal Sapienza thanked everyone for coming and opened the meeting with prayer.
3. *Year-in-Review* – Looking back, Pastor Sal began by expressing gratitude for all the wonderful DUCC’s activities and accomplishments this past year.

Highlights from the slide presentation included:

- a) DUCC’s 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration and block party.
  - b) Welcoming the Michigan Conference UCC Minister Rev. Dr. Lillian Daniel.
  - c) Completion of several campus projects: new roofs on the church, Retreat House, and Friendship Hall; restoration of the church’s front doors; wallpaper replacement, pews refinish and new AV deck for inside the church; and replacing the exterior lighting to meet “Dark Sky” standards.
  - d) DUCC sponsored an Afghan refugee family that included providing housing at the Spring St. location. Because of the generous donations from our congregation and the continual guidance and support from the Afghan Task Force, the family was able to recently relocate to Holland. Their journey with DUCC was #6 in the nation of UCC church’s news stories.
  - e) DUCC welcomed 22 new church members.
  - f) DUCC was recognized by YouTube for surpassing more than 500,000 views.
  - g) Our podcast library (Apple, Google Play, Amazon, Spotify) had more than 100,000 downloads.
  - h) Group Book reads were well attended and included: “Refugia Faith”, “On the Brink of Everything”, and, “The End of Night.”
  - i) The Crop Hunger Walk raised \$16,228 and ranked #3 in the nation.
  - j) Events included: participation in Community Pride; Pet Blessings in the park; and highway and beach cleanup organized by the Creation Justice Committee.
  - k) Our outreach continues with over 40 years of ongoing support to Christian Neighbors, Stephen Ministry and Congregational Care.
4. *Looking Forward – Vision for the Year Ahead*
    - a) Upcoming events – Pastor Sal
      - 1) John Pavlovitz, well-known Pastor, speaker and writer of several books will be speaking again at DUCC on Saturday, March 11.
      - 2) Pastor Sal will be a Michigan delegate at the “Making all Things New” General Synod 34 in Indianapolis from June 30-July 4. The General Synod

meets in the spring every four years with delegates from all 5,000 UCC churches.

- b) Creation Justice (CJ) Committee – Chris Clark (CJ Facilitator) shared CJ activities for 2023 that include:

- 1) Spring Community Book Read, “The Hidden Life of Trees” by Peter Wohlleben.
- 2) “Dark Sky Week” observation April 15-22.
- 3) Exploring the possibility of a labyrinth located behind the Retreat House that would be open to the public.
- 4) Developing a plan that will add trees and native plants throughout the campus.
- 5) Looking at long term measures to reduce DUCC’s carbon foot print.
- 6) Create a CJ bookcase in the Friendship Hall with books to loan out.

- c) Upcoming 88 Spring St. Refresh Project– Kelly Wright (Council Trustee) Identified needs for the campus include:

- 1) Meeting spaces
- 2) Administrative offices
- 3) Storage

To meet those needs, a project plan was developed that will convert the three bedrooms to office space and a conference room. The plan includes: painting the interior; carpet replacement; the installation of new light fixtures and glass office doors; and, appropriate furniture for office/meeting space. In addition, an upgrade/install of suitable technology will be addressed.

The project will also manage the need to sort, clean and organize the campus wide storage spaces as well as a cleanup and refresh of the Spring St. exterior landscaping.

Team leader volunteers to execute the work under Kelly’s leadership consist of:

- 1) Larry Fuerst
- 2) Kathleen Mueller
- 3) Carol Rice
- 4) Bernie Lopata

- d) Douglas UCC Retreat House – Kathleen Mueller (Retreat House Coordinator)

A fresh advertising campaign and a redesigned brochure, has been developed to expand the use of the Retreat House (RH) by clergy and their staffs. Ads for the RH are placed in UCC newsletters that go out to over 200 churches. Because summer interns are no longer staying at the RH, this increase in availability will support the RH mission of offering a comfortable place for clergy and their staffs to “meditate, collaborate, or simply, rejuvenate.”

- e) 2023 Fundraising Campaign for the 88 Spring St. refresh and RH labyrinth – Peter Mueller presented the goal of raising \$100,000 that could be achieved with 200 church members pledging \$500.

5. *Financial Update* – Pete (prepared by Stacy Honson – Council Treasurer) reported that DUCC is financially healthy. It was noted that the shortfall of over \$76,000 was due to new roofs and gutters, the sanctuary refresh, front doors refinish etc. and was covered with cash flow and savings.

Through December 31, 2022

Income:

Actual: \$169,354

Budget: \$164,750

Expenses:

Actual: \$222,815

Budget: \$238,671

Net Income Loss:

Actual: (\$53,461)

Budget: (\$73,921)

6. *Grant Proposal Committee (GPC) Update* – Pete (prepared by Tim Lemanski – GPC Facilitator)

Grants awarded to date FY23:

- a) Saugatuck/Douglas/Fennville Arts Initiative: \$2,500 towards a sculpture honoring Migrant Workers.
  - b) Christian Neighbors: \$2,500 for winter jackets.
  - c) The Arc of Allegan County: \$5,000 for the “Beyond Bones” program that provides employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
  - d) 70x7 Life Recovery: \$2,500 to provide support for individuals released from incarceration.
  - e) Southwest MI Interfaith Action: \$1,250 towards operating expenses.
- Total: \$13,750.

7. *Security Update* – Peter Mueller, Kelly Wright, and Mike VerMerris (Sunday Volunteer Coordinator) attended a workshop in December on the topic of “Church Safety” that was presented by the Allegan County Sheriff’s Department. Several local churches were represented that will allow for networking and the sharing of information with each other.

Goals:

- a) Provide CPR and AED training for congregants.
- b) Develop an emergency exit policy for fires etc.
- c) Update the safety training criteria for Sunday volunteers.

8. *Questions/Comments/Adjournment* – Pete

a) Questions:

- 1) Has there been an accounting of Retreat House expenses in comparison to the income generated by guests?

Answer: Stacy Honson (Council Treasurer) offered that this reporting hasn’t been formalized because of Pastor Sal’s office being housed in the RH. However, RH contributions and costs such as utilities by location are tracked.

b) Comments:

- 1) Participant agreed with the church safety goals and stressed the importance of congregants being prepared for medical emergencies as

well as trained to know what aberrant behaviors to look for and to maintain an awareness of their surroundings.

- c) Adjournment: Peter Mueller thanked everyone for attending today's meeting.  
**Motion**: from Barbara Lucier to adjourn at 12:36 pm. Wendy Hamlin second.  
Motion approved.