



**CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - APPROVED
FEBRUARY 12, 2024**

IN ATTENDANCE: Stan Greene, Mark Johnston, Bernice Lopata, Kelly Wright; **Via ZOOM:** Stacy Honson, Jim Kern, Mike Mok, Mike VerMerris; **Guest:** Jeff Spangler, chair, Pastoral Search Committee

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER: Mark Johnston called the meeting to order and offered a reflection shortly after 6:00 p.m.

JANUARY 9, 2024 COUNCIL MINUTES: Mike VerMerris sent the minutes prior to the meeting. Corrected Lewis Corbin’s name in Trustee Report.

- Kelly Wright made a motion to approve the minutes; Mike Mok seconded. Motion approved with the correction.
- **ACTION:** The minutes will be included with the E-pistle and posted on the Friendship Hall bulletin board.

PASTOR’S REPORT/SEARCH COMMITTEE: Jeff Spangler distributed a draft copy of the church profile to council members prior to the meeting. The Search Committee has approved the document, which will be shared with the congregation after final edits have been made. Jeff came to highlight sections of the 48-page report and to answer questions from council members.

- The template for the document came from the UCC. In writing the document, Jeff tried to make it more readable and user-friendly by formatting and adding photos and graphics. He also acknowledged the editing assistance of Kathleen Mueller and Julie Ridl.
- The profile includes input from members of the church community, drawn from the listening sessions: Who are we? Who is our neighbor? Who is God calling us to become? Jeff remarked that the listening sessions “added value” to the content of the report. The committee was also pleased with the number and quality of the community’s response to the surveys sent by the committee.
- Jeff reviewed the report with council members, answering questions, noting resources used in preparing the document and welcomed feedback from the group.
- **NEXT STEPS:**
 - Jeff will provide an update on the work of the Search Committee at the service on February 18, 2024.
 - Stan will give a report on the search for an interim pastor on behalf of the Church Council.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Stacy Honson reported she had no concerns about the financials at this time. She provided detailed reports to the council in advance of the meeting. The council accepted and approved the report unanimously.

	January 2024		YTD January 2024	
	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
Income	\$24,148	\$34,992	\$197,965	\$211,536
Expense	11,414	29,050	175,740	203,350
Net Income	\$12,734	\$5,942	\$22,225	\$8,186

INTERIM PASTOR SEARCH: Stan Greene distributed a report and two prospective candidate profiles to the council prior to the meeting. Highlights from Stan's report:

Stan met with Rev. Lawrence Richardson, via Zoom on February 9. Lawrence is the Associate Conference Minister of Church Vitality and Transitions for the Michigan Conference of the UCC and is the Conference resource who will support our search for an interim pastor. Stan summarized our conversations to date and asked for his perspective on the process. Key items discussed:

- Lawrence has met with Rev. Cheryl Burke and has some context regarding Douglas UCC and our overall pastoral search. He indicated that the Conference has received a second profile from a candidate who is interested in an interim pastor role.
- Generally, the process for calling an interim pastor begins with a review of profiles provided by the Conference. We may also receive applications from other clergy, including retired or semi-retired clergy in our congregation.
- Lawrence replied, "I can't say they must," in response to my question about whether an interim pastor must have standing in the UCC. If we choose to pursue someone who doesn't have standing in the UCC, the Conference has limited ability to provide background information regarding the candidate.
- If we select someone as an interim pastor who doesn't have standing in the UCC, the Conference can extend opportunities for that person to affiliate with the UCC in order to facilitate Conference support during the interim tenure.
- While April is a possible start date, that's largely at the mercy of any existing commitments of the person we select. Lawrence recommended that we consider accommodating a request for a later start date if that's a point of contention for our desired candidate.
- The Council is empowered to enter into a covenant with an interim pastor on behalf of the congregation. The decision does not require a vote by the congregation.
- Lawrence requested to meet with the Council and the interim pastor after we make our selection.

Note: Stan drafted an Interim Ministry Covenant, which he reviewed with Richardson, who requested that we send a copy of any final Interim Covenant to him for Conference files. Council members received a copy of the document.

Further Discussion:

- We want flexibility with the interim's time commitment as we continue the search for a full-time pastor. Offer an interim pastor a three-month contract, with two-month extensions if needed.
- The covenant includes a 30-day termination clause for either party.
- The covenant also includes a review/assessment by the Council. Council will determine the best time for the review.
- Suggested office hours: Three days on campus from 10:00 – 3:00 (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) with additional remote hours, totaling approximately 30 hours per week. Office hours will coincide with the church administrator's work schedule.
- In conversation with any applicant, ask what his/her experience has been as an interim pastor. What have they done in this role/ What do they bring to the congregation? Have they ministered in an open and affirming church community? Will we need to use the retreat house as a parsonage for the interim?
- **NEXT STEPS:**
 - Stan will reach out to applicants for an initial interview and present viable candidates to the council for its consideration.
 - Mark will update the congregation on the search process for the interim pastor.

DUCC Administrator Hours: During the time since Pastor Sal left and while we are in the search process for both a interim and full-time minister, Julie Ridl has assumed more responsibilities as campus administrator. Council agreed that she should be compensated for the additional hours she is working.

ACTION: Mark Johnston made a motion to increase the administrator's pay by 50% until the workload abates (likely after a transition period after the full-time pastor is in place), retroactive to January 1, 2024. Council will revisit this arrangement after four months. Mike Mok seconded the motion and council approved it unanimously.

TRUSTEE REPORT: Kelly Wright sent a report to the council in advance of the meeting (included below).

Previous Business & Recent Activities:

➤ Received quote from Haveman Electric for addressing several electrical issues around campus, including updating the Retreat House (RH) electrical service: Depending on the options and approach selected, the RH wiring update may be an involved project.

ACTION: Council decided to table this item until we know whether the Retreat House/Parsonage will be extended as a housing option to the interim pastor.

➤ Received memorial garden perimeter fence replacement quote from Chris Maitner to replace the current fence footprint with black finish aluminum w/spear top posts: 36" high, spear top = appx. \$3,400 or 42" high, spear top = appx. \$4,500. The current fence pickets are 29" and 34" high, vertical support posts are 40" and 46" high.

ACTION: Discussion tabled so we can integrate the fence project with the landscaping project proposed by the Creation Justice Team.

➤ The Creation Justice Team sent a letter to Council asking its approval to accept a proposal from Lake Effect Garden & Design to create a landscape design for the campus for \$3,500. (The proposal is for design work only; implementing the plan would require additional funding.) The landscaping project will be done in phases.

Next Steps:

- Kelly will represent the council and coordinate efforts with the Creation Justice Team for the landscape project. Council members raised the issues of ongoing maintenance of the landscaping and the need to reverence the remains in the Memorial Garden.
- Council will invite Chris Clark to attend a future council meeting to discuss the plan. The congregation will also need to approve the plan.

ACTION: Council voted to approve the proposal to hire Lake Effect Garden & Design to design a landscape plan.

➤ Rich Marth has agreed to lead the Health, Wellness and Safety Team, with Wendy Hamlin leading the Health and Wellness sub-team and Peter Mueller leading the Safety sub-team. The full team met in January and Wendy attended a Safety/Security training session conducted by the Allegan County Sheriff Department.

➤ Reviewed repairs to Isabel Graham Center exterior with a carpenter, waiting for a quote for the work.

➤ Numerous small items have been addressed, including the installation of new video equipment.

Upcoming Activities & New Business:

- Create a plan and schedule electrical projects.
- Remove the current Memorial Garden fence this Spring.
- Install new lettering for exterior of Isabel Graham Center.
- Cover pastor name on display board next to front door of church.
- Refresh Isabel Graham Center exterior repaint estimate.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned around 8:37 p.m. The next council meeting will be held on March 12, 2024.

Minutes prepared by B. Lopata