

APPROVED AS OF 5/4/2020

Chelsea First United Methodist Church

Administrative Council Minutes

Meeting Date 4/16/2020, 7:30-9pm via Zoom Conference

In Attendance: Edie Wiarda, Charles Schmunk, Sandy Schmunk, Joy Barrett, Mike Vanderspool,
Jim Alford III, Dana Schmunk, Kerry Plank, Jim Alford

Guests: Diane Brown, Michelle King, Darlene Schaffer, David Schaffer

Opening Prayer – Edie spoke of Gratitude and Humility. “Grant us wisdom, courage for the facing of this hour.”

Impacts of Public Health Emergency:

1. PPP Application: Income/Expenses – Kerry Plank reported the church has submitted the PPP Application through the recent CARES legislation, which allows us to borrow a forgivable loan of \$77,666.92. This has been approved. Have not received the money yet. The money must be used for payroll, mortgage interest. March financial donations were slightly above the budgeted amount, expenses slightly below budgeted amount. Operating surplus currently \$167,000 at end of March. So far April giving is below expected. Will look at this at end of month.
2. Staffing – Joy Barrett: All staff are working, in different ways than accustomed but in meaningful work that reaches our congregation. Many leaders in the church are also working to keep things moving forward.
3. RE: Worship Services. Our Conference Leadership is following the direction of our Governor regarding only online worship services, no gatherings.
4. Facility Use – Dana Schmunk noted we have the heat on throughout the building, so the church is accessible for anyone needing it. The Red Cross held two blood drives at the church. Expenses for heating the building were down \$2000 last month.
5. Mission Tithes RFP – Edie Wiarda reached out to the organizations that we issued invitations to, easing the timelines we gave for submitting. All responded that they are starting to work on a joint response. Edie let them know we need an in-person all church conference before funds could be approved for distribution.
6. Faith In Action: Sandy Schmunk reached out to leaders at Faith in Action. They note that they have had an incredible outpouring from the community and have leveraged federal funds. At the same time, they had to cancel their annual fundraiser dinner. They are able to help those with immediate needs and have not seen a significant jump over normal but expect that there will be a significant change as fallout of COVID-19 extends over time. Currently they need food product but do not want anyone to go out shopping just for them. If people are out getting groceries and could get extra – they can drop donations at their front door during hours they are open: 11-7 Mon and Wed, 9-4 Tues and Thurs. They are not accepting clothing or household donations, nor are

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they using volunteers at this time. Financial donations are needed as they expect a significant need by year end.

7. Church COVID Response Team – Sandy Schmunk reported that staff and members of our response team, along with several volunteers have so far contacted about 158 church families to check on how they are doing and what needs they might have. Many have expressed how pleased they are to have the church reach out. Some really seem to need contact, especially elders who are very isolated now. Many also expressed how much they appreciate the worship services and other on-line efforts. There have been a few specific requests (such as for groceries or toilet paper) that have been immediately addressed. We have also found places where corrections were needed in our data base, and people who do not have access to on-line information. There have been lots of general prayer requests (for front line workers) and a few specific requests. The team is still working on determining where to funnel specific requests and how to best preserve privacy by asking those persons whether they wish for staff to pray for them, for a small prayer group, or church wide. A suggestion was made to keep a list of person's mentioned who are part of our congregation or closely associated with those of our congregation who are first responders. Michelle King developed a spread sheet for information and has compiled trends, observations and action items. Many people have offered to help with these efforts and the team is determining next steps. Edie wondered what information we should be passing on to the congregation regarding the response team efforts. Dana suggested we wait another week or so to make sure all contacts have been made.
8. SPRC: Sandy Schmunk reported that the financial manager position is on hold. Kristy Fetyko is willing, and prefers, to stay in this position during this difficult time.

Church-Wide Objectives -- summary of ratings exercise from 3/12/2020 meeting

See attached summary from previous meeting. The Coronavirus response has risen to the immediate top of the list. Coronavirus response is the current top objective, then the top 4 objectives outlined.

Ramifications of General Conference postponement: Diane Brown was asked to update the group. The date of the next General Conference is still to be announced. This conference would bring 862 delegates together from around the world. Also, there would be numerous additional people needed to run the conference. Even before the US shut down many were not able to get visas to travel. The Jurisdictional conferences are also postponed to undetermined dates (as they will depend on General Conference). There are some things that were voted on in 2016 that expire (such as the budget). We still have a Book of Discipline. The 2019 Special General Conference voted to put punitive actions due to violations of the Book of Discipline on issues of human sexuality into abeyance – for example, no church trials will be started against clergy who perform gay marriages. This abeyance is still in place. There are procedures in the Book of Discipline regarding how churches could leave the denomination if local churches wanted to take a different direction, rather than waiting until the next General Conference. It

looks like this delay could be significant and local church decisions would be delayed. The Michigan Conference Session has also been delayed, monitoring the situation in the State on how large gatherings will be resumed.

Qs on LGBTQ Stance:

What is your personal preference regarding this church's stance on gay clergy, gay marriage?

What is your sense of the congregation's desires?

Does Ad Council decide and declare? Or seek congregational input? If input do you mean a vote?

What about our church's compliance with denomination rules?

Mike: Agreed with Joy in not going against the Book of Discipline when it looked like answers were forthcoming. Would need more discernment to take a stand on this. Am wrestling with what I truly believe at this point. Want to continue going through the process of discussion and discernment. I think Ad Council needs to be 100% supportive of the stance our pastoral staff takes.

John: Personally, supportive of gay clergy and gay marriage. Difficult to answer where the congregation's desires are. Has some apprehension regarding having the Ad Council decide. Supportive of stating opinions clearly but not speaking for the congregation. Regarding having someone married in our church – what does that mean if our clergy are not involved. Grievances could be filed. At this point the Bishop would probably not move the grievance forward. I do not want to do anything that puts Joy or Rodney in an uncomfortable position. At the same time, I feel we need to take a stance.

Dana: Personal opinions have not changed but understanding of the issues is deeper. Some older people in our church seem to be having a difficult time with marriage between same sex persons. I strongly support Joy and Rodney and not putting them in a difficult position. Role of Ad Council – need to come together on this. Important to help everyone read and understand what is in the Bible. We need to be relevant to the LGBTQ community, and if we cannot listen to everyone and support everyone, then we are failing our community. The Bible gives us guidance in loving everyone and that LGBTQ persons can get into heaven when they give themselves to God, same as everyone. If we can be understanding and truly willing to love everyone, we can communicate and help them on their path to God. People will shun us if we do so to them.

Sandy: I believe all are children of God and that includes being a part of the ministry as clergy and to marry. I think we have a long history of leaders in our church that lean that way, otherwise they would go elsewhere. I think Ad Council's job is to lead the discussion and to help people feel heard. I do not agree with votes. I think people would be upset about not following the Discipline.

Charles: Believe we should wait and see where the denomination goes. I think we as a Council could take a stance regarding the language of the Discipline, which would facilitate a clear understanding of our position.

Jim: I am a habitual rule follower and would not want to put our clergy in a difficult position with regards to the rules in our current Book of Discipline. People should be judged by their actions and the things they contribute to our church and not by a label. I believe Ad Council

should give opinions and help others state theirs. I would not like to see the vocal majority make decisions for the silent minority.

Kerry: Personal beliefs – don't think sexual preferences should dictate whether they can be clergy or be married in the church. I think we should listen carefully to our youth. I believe our congregation leans progressive. Should look for some way to hear and tally opinions. Agree with following the rules of the denomination.

Edie: Personally, support and believe it is theologically valid for gay people to be married. Do not claim to understand the totality of what our congregation believes. We look to our pastors to provide leadership. Pastor Joy has been careful and strong in her leadership. I look for this body to be supportive of that leadership. In VCI we have been strongly told we should figure out where we stand, where our mission field is. Feel we have straddled the fence for too long. Not satisfying those who take a traditional stance nor those who are more progressive. We lose people because we don't take a stance. We have pastoral authority that we can support. Someone has to declare where we are going. Discussion takes a lot of congregational time and energy. Should make a clear statement before General Conference meets, since its delay is likely to be a year. Adopting a policy of in some way not following the Discipline would be the clearest statement we could make about where this congregation is going.

Joy – Take seriously the idea of breaking rules. Do not believe homosexuality is a sin, or that LGBTQ persons live outside the grace of God. Do believe this congregation needs to be clear about who we are, and should make statements to the community. Ad Council should take the lead in gathering people and moving to that end.

Dominant theme is support for Joy as our pastor and for her authority.

A request to Ad Council from Darlene Schaffer has been shared with Ad Council members. This is related to information sharing about what it means to be a Traditional Church. Delay until at least the next meeting. One response was that we should, as a group, support sharing this information with the congregation.

Future Meetings:

Thursday, May 14, 7:30-9pm Ad Council Meeting

Church Conference (June?)

Please hold every 2nd Thursday for possible Ad Council meeting

Closing Prayer - Edie

BIG PICTURE ISSUES – OBJECTIVES

Brainstormed List as of 12/19/2019, with additions as of 2/13/2020 and with ratings summary as of March Meeting:

Top Tier:

- NEW AND TOP OF LIST = COVID-19 RESPONSE:
 - A)– Transformation & Sustainment of Ministries.
 - B) Congregational Care
- (1) Clarify our policy aspirations regarding LGBTQ marriage and ordination and consider adopting a public statement that explicitly welcomes LGBTQ visitors and members. These objectives must be pursued with broad congregational input.
- (2) Identify target demographic groups based on Mission Insite and implement changes to worship, hospitality, and outreach as appropriate to their needs [with VCM's PIT team].

Second Tier:

- (3) Launch a messaging / marketing effort – build community awareness of who we are.
- (8) Support the administration of active mission efforts recommended by the Outreach Ministries Team

Third Tier:

- (9) Improve Safe Sanctuaries policy and/or compliance
- (4) Implement an ongoing method for identifying spiritual gifts and connecting volunteers with opportunities for service that use those gifts and meet program needs [with Nominations and Leadership Development Team]

Almost Universally Seen as “Important” but not “Essential”:

- (7) Support the administration of ongoing small groups for building community and spiritual connection

Bottom Tier:

- (5) Solicit proposals for the use of the sanctuary renovation capital campaign tithe from community partners and disperse the money [Outreach Team has distributed an RFP as of March 2020]
- (6) Support the administration of more events focused on intergenerational fun and fellowship [e.g., Game Night]
- (10) Support to Food Ministries to ease volunteer stresses and constraints

BIG PICTURE ISSUES – CONTINUING DISCUSSION ON GAY CLERGY & MARRIAGE, LGBTQIA+ WELCOME

1. Considerations for Ad Council:
 - What does the congregation need to hear from us now?
 - What actions/decisions should Ad Council make under its own authority? What decisions should devolve to congregational vote?
 - Is there benefit to a congregational survey or “straw poll?”
 - In what ways has the denominational turmoil been holding us back? What clarity or actions would get us “unstuck?”
 - Timing/Speed -- What actions, if any, are needed during 2020? Before Gen Conference (May)?
 - What is our attitude toward staying within the letter of the Book of Discipline, vs some measure of “ecclesial disobedience?”
 - What can we do to minimize pain and disruption?

2. Examples of actions taken by other congregations:
 - Offer activities to help with congregational and personal discernment
 - Do a congregational survey or “straw poll”
 - Develop an internal / congregational statement of policy intent
 - Implement new policies -- e.g., allow same-sex marriages to be performed in our building
 - Develop public-facing statements of LGBTQ support (welcome statement, rainbow banner, etc.)
 - Join Reconciling Network (discernment / education / advocacy)
 - Issue public statements on CFUMC policy intent and actions
 - Focused prayer efforts, either as part of discernment or advocacy.

Questions for discussion on 4/16/2020 IF TIME:

1. What is your personal preference regarding this church’s stance on gay clergy, gay marriage?
2. What is your sense of the congregation’s desires?
3. Does Ad Council decide and declare? Or seek congregational input? If input do you mean a vote?
4. What about our church’s compliance with denomination rules?