

APPROVED AS OF 6/9/2020

Chelsea First United Methodist Church

Administrative Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date 5/14/2020, 7:30-9:30 pm via Zoom Conference

In Attendance: Charles Schmunk, Edie Wiarda, Dana Schmunk, Sandy Schmunk, Joy Barrett, Rodney Gasaway, John Seto, James Alford III, Brenda Beck, Mike Vanderspool, Kerry Plank.

Guests: Diane Brown, Darlene Schaffer, David Schaffer

Opening Prayer – Edie Wiarda, referenced our Reformation forefathers with words taken from the Anglican book of common prayer.

Minutes of the April 16,2020 Ad Council Meeting were previously approved via email vote.

COVID19: Sustainment & Transformation of Ministries:

- a. Finance – Kerry Plank reported April income was down 25% relative to budget (\$40,100 vs \$54,300). Unpledged income was down 80% from previous Aprils. Expenses were under budget for the month by \$5,000. Overall YTD we are \$16,500 behind budget (\$26,900 less in income, but also \$10,400 less in expenses), with \$10,200 of that coming from April. With approval from the finance team and Ad Council we applied for and were approved for PPP loan through the federal CARES act. \$77,664, has been received. This money can be spent in 8 weeks on payroll, health ins., utilities, mortgage interest. There has been further discussion about the PPP program with some feedback on whether we needed this. We feel the uncertainty in front of us is too great to make a decision at this time. Will revisit this question in Sept/Oct.
- b. Congregational care – Edie noted that Michelle King is now coordinating the Care Team which has included making calls to many in the congregation and meeting immediate needs. People have offered to send notes/cards, and Michelle is linking these people to names.
- c. Restart of In-Person Worship – Joy – Feel we are months away from totally opening as a church. Staff have been looking at reducing all the things that would need to be sanitized and Jody has removed all books, bibles from the pews. Monday AA groups will be back, under the governor's approval. Only certain areas will be open for them to traverse. Putting together plans ABC: i.e. Facebook live services, moving to small groups worship. Jody Croskey, Diane Brown, Linda Meloche and Joy met to talk about ushers, greeters, and where people could sit maintaining 6 ft. distance. With this distancing we could fit 50 people total in the Sanctuary. Even when able to open, people may not feel able to participate. If able to open to a set number of people, how do we decide who gets to come? How many people could we fit in Grams Hall, as secondary seating? Anticipate continuing online worship even when able to do in person. Diane noted people in the same household could sit closer than 6 ft apart, but

that would then create logistical problems in arranging seating. Michigan Conference has put together a guidelines book on re-opening.

Joy said that Jody (Facilities Manager) has been very busy , with every carpet cleaned, every room sanitized, files all organized.

2. Updates on Selected Congregational Objectives:

- a. ID of Target Demographic Groups & pass thru to other ministries – Mike Vanderspool, report skipped for this month.
- b. Outreach Ministries & Mission Tithe RFP – Sandy Schmunk reported new information and deadlines have been sent to previously identified agencies (Faith in Action, Youth mental Health Community Collaborative and Chelsea Senior Center) regarding submission on proposals for use of funds from the Sanctuary Renovation Mission Tithe. The new plan calls for: 1. Submission of draft proposals by July 31st. 2. Meeting/video conference for presentation and discussion with representatives of CFUMC by August 31st; 3. Agreement on and submission of final proposals by September 4th, and 4. All church conference approval vote by September 30th (which can be held by video conference if need be).
- c. Safe Sanctuaries Policy – Joy notes that we have a team that will begin working on revision of the Policy. Liza Gray and Jon Van Hoek have suggestions for changes. The goal is to bring something back to Ad Council for the July Meeting and implement the changes starting in September. We will not have any in-person children’s activities this summer. Jim asked if we had policies that cover us for online meetings. Joy said that we do. Also on team 2 people on the committee in the past, one from SPRC. Still waiting for confirmation from some.

Late Note 5/26/20: Members of the task force for revisions to the Safe Sanctuary policy are Todd Hubbard (SPRC liaison), Kasie Cousino, Katie Giardello and staff members Liza Gray and Jon Van Hoek. Pastor Joy will convene the group and assist as needed.

3. Darlene Schaffer request for an Informational meeting regarding “Traditionalist” denomination. (See attached request which was modified from a previous request.) Edie noted that Darlene represents a constituency in the congregation that is worthy of respect. Darlene stated her desire is that there be opportunities within the congregation for open conversations on possible future directions of the United Methodist Church. Edie explained that “The Protocol” is a plan that was to be brought before the General Conference, now delayed till September 2021. It is an outlined agreement of representatives across the spectrum of the UM church which would allow new denominations to separate and still keep properties etc. The “Traditionalists” group has already organized a detailed plan. If this process all unfolds it would allow the churches of the United Methodist Church to be sorted into these denominations. If Protocol is adopted, the default for the local church would be to go in same direction as its Annual Conference; in Michigan this would likely mean default would be to stay with UMC. Local churches could choose differently from their Annual Conference by holding a vote. Darlene is asking for a “fairness in sharing information” about alternatives. The book of Discipline notes that such meetings do not need to happen in the local church building. Darlene noted that the Michigan Conference UMC did vote to move “The Protocol” forward for the General Conference when it

happens. Also that the book of Discipline outlines what a church building can be used for and that the Senior Pastor has final approval. Edie brought forth a Draft Policy proposing such meetings led by groups that wish to form “New Methodist Denominations” not happen within the church building but that we would advertise these in the Pathfinder and other church media. (See attached Proposed Policy: Publicity for Informational Meetings held by representatives of “New Methodist Denominations”). This does not preclude having discussions within the church building about the General Conference and items to be presented or which have been presented. Points of clarification requested by Mike: Is the draft policy aimed at limiting outside representatives of proposed denominations? Darlene noted these presenters would be ordained elders from churches leaning toward Traditionalist Views who would present the different options. Information would be available for people to consider, not just choose right away. Mike noted he wants to be sure we still have open discussions within our congregation. Joy responded, “ It seems this request is too soon. General Conference has been postponed until 2021. We do not know what will be approved. It seems we should not give opportunity to one group as if it will be the only one. I would like us to wait until the General Conference has acted, then ask all groups who might be forming to present their platforms.” Charles agreed we should not take action at this time but wait until things evolve. **Joy Barrett moved that we respond to this request with a no at this time, due to it being premature. Charles Schmunk seconded. Unanimous agreement.**

4. Continuing Ad Council Discussion on Clarifying our LGBTQ Stance

At April meeting, members of Ad Council were asked to share their own beliefs related to gay marriage and ordination, and what we perceive this church would want to portray. Two members were not in attendance at last meeting, so shared at this meeting.

Rodney – I would want the option of doing a gay marriage if it is right for those two people. I am more reserved on making a grand statement on behalf of the congregation. I think there may be more people in the congregation that hold traditionalist beliefs than we might believe there are, so I do not want to speak for them.

Brenda – I feel we should be welcoming to all. I personally question what the true makeup of the members of the church is. As we navigate this pandemic there may be some hard questions that play into this long term.

Edie reviewed examples of a Welcome Statement (drawn from CFUMC Press Release of 3/7/2019) and an Aspirational Statement. (See attached) I would like us to move toward more clarity as our Welcoming Statement does not really tell people where we stand.

If this Aspirational Statement were on our website would it constitute clarity for us? If not this statement, what would provide clarity?

Mike: Yes, this makes a clear statement. I believe this states where we intend to be and what we intend to do until the General Conference meets in 2021. I think we need to continue to have intentional discussions with others in our congregation so we can be more representative.

This statement could be the basis for the ongoing discussions, but shouldn't need to be shared verbatim during the discussions. Timing? I think it has started already. We should all be in discussions with our neighbors about this, even if not comfortable.

Kerry: I agree with this statement. I think the majority of the people in the church would support this statement.

Jim Alford: I like the statement. I feel it is direct, makes a bold statement. Most people probably know this is the way our church leans and even if they do not totally agree they can accept that.

John Seto – I really think the statement itself is clear but we could also make additional points regarding gay marriage and gay clergy serving in the church, which I believe is what most people want to know regarding what our stance is. I fully support the statement as is and am willing to sign/endorse it as long as it is a statement from Ad Council (not speaking for the entire congregation) and we are unanimous. As an Ad Council, I believe we have some authority and responsibility to make some statement.

Joy – Speaking as an administrative officer of the church, I would say that the members of the Ad Council have been entrusted with leadership by the congregation. I like this statement. Could we put it out to the congregation from the Ad Council and bring it to focus groups to discuss how they feel about it? This could bring it to a point of a congregational statement, and keep us out of a “voting” stance.

Dana – I totally agree with the statement, it is ready to go and we should go with it. I agree with the thoughts from John, Joy and Jim. If we released this statement and sent it out to everyone, I am willing to take calls from people who want to talk to an Ad Council member about their feelings regarding the statement, in addition to small groups we might open for discussion. Some people might feel better talking one on one.

Sandy – I am in agreement to put this out as a statement from the Ad Council and invite people into focus groups and get to a point of understanding in the congregation.

Charles – I think the statement is ambiguous and needs more clarity with the language we would like excised. Many people don't know what the UMC Discipline says. Small group meetings could be a way of communicating.

Brenda – I personally have not had enough individual conversations with others. With the extension of the date of the conference, I think there is a lot more due diligence that I want to do. I agree with the aspirational statement. Some people may not be willing to voice their feelings in group settings but would 1-1. People right now are feeling isolated and there is no good way to interact with one another as they are used to being “there” in person.

Joy – There is a lot of anxiety right now, and if we were to put this out right now would we be putting more anxiety out there? Perhaps we should put a pin in this and wait until September to put more out. It would not be good to start one on one conversations which leave others to feel left out. We can't really say anything definitive about this statement until we are ready to put it out.

Rodney – At this time I am concerned about putting this out as a congregational statement. If said by the "Ad Council" at the right time it could be helpful.

Edie – perhaps we should be doing some word smithing and getting ready to put out at the right time.

Diane – I do think this is not a good time to be sharing with our congregation when some would feel this as a shaking of the ground. I agree with waiting until later, but not losing track of defining "who we are". Tonight would have been the last full night of legislation for the General Conference. It will be a long while before that body meets.

Edie – I did get a phone call from someone in the congregation who expressed that it feels like we are waffling, and clarity would be helpful. I deeply appreciate this discussion. Take a deep breath, pray on this, have further discussion next time. Edie will try to clarify the statement .

John: I thank Edie for continuing to push us toward clarity.

David and Darlene: No comment at this point. We thank Edie for the leadership in this group.

5. New Business – no new business brought forth.
6. Upcoming Meetings:
 - a. June 11
 - b. July 9
 - c. August 13
 - d. Special Church Conference on Mission Tithe – Late Summer (Can be held via Zoom)
7. Closing Prayer – Prayer of thanks for this time together and the privilege of serving you and your people.

ATTACHMENT 1:

Revision to Request from Darlene Schaffer...

Following the April meeting mention of my request, I am modifying my previous request because of the postponement of the General Conference and because of the perceived timeline being put forth for decisions and declarations within CFUMC. I am requesting that the Ad Council, in the spirit of the protocol and in the likelihood of an amicable separation of the UM Church that people of good faith now agree is necessary, please provide the congregation with opportunities to hear from the representatives of what is commonly referred to as the "traditionalist" denomination, allowing for an informational presentation at CFUMC with interested parties. I request this be done before any declarations or votes regarding CFUMC position on LGBTQIA+ ministry. (I have attached a copy of the original request.)

[Note: Darlene Schaffer's original request was submitted to Ad Council on March 12, 2020; discussion was not taken up during April meeting. The main text of the original request was as follows.

"Request for informational meeting at CFUMC covering a New Methodist Denomination commonly referred to as the "Traditionalist" denomination.

In the spirit of the protocol for reconciliation and grace through separation and restructuring, it is requested that representatives of what is commonly referred to as the "traditionalist" denomination be given access to hold an informational presentation at CFUMC with interested parties prior to MI Annual Conference 2020 where a resolution has been put forth for the MI Annual Conference 2020 to 'vote on its intention to separate from The United Methodist Church to join a New Methodist Denomination' has been submitted. It is requested that notice of the informational meeting be included in the Pathfinder and posted on the bulletin board."

The text of this request also went on to cite parts of the relevant legislation.]

ATTACHMENT 2:

**Proposed Policy:
Publicity for Informational Meetings
Held by Representatives of “New Methodist Denominations”**

Draft; 5/14/2020

[Note: This proposed policy was offered by Edie Wiarda in response to the Schaffer request. It was neither voted on nor adopted. A different motion was offered in response, and adopted, as discussed in the Minutes.]

Context

The global United Methodist Church (UMC) will hold the next meeting of its decision-making body, the General Conference, in 2021 (GC2021).

It is expected that at this meeting, a process will be set down to allow for amicable separation from the UMC of groups that wish to form “New Methodist Denominations.” It is expected that these New Methodist Denominations will be granted a time window in which to declare their intent to form, and to organize themselves. It is also expected that these groups will have permission, within limits, to publicize and hold informational meetings with those interested in affiliation.

Proposed Policy

The Administrative Council of Chelsea First United Methodist Church (CFUMC) announces the following policy with regard to informational meetings conducted by representatives of New Methodist Denominations.

1. Such informational meetings will not be held on CFUMC premises.
2. CFUMC will publicize the time, place, and content (such as agenda and speakers) of such informational meetings via our all-church newsletter (currently called the Path Finder). Wording provided by the meeting organizers will be accepted so long as it is succinct, subject to approval by CFUMC’s senior pastor.
3. Such announcements within the all-church newsletter will be prefaced by explanatory text provided by the Administrative Council. Its purpose will be to make clear that the meeting is not offered or endorsed by CFUMC, but that the information is being provided as a courtesy and in the spirit of amicable separation.
4. Groups will be considered eligible for publicity for informational meetings if they meet GC2021’s criteria for New Methodist Denominations (or whatever terminology is used); i.e., to be a significant entity, and eligible for separation via the means set down by GC2021. Prior to GC2021, groups will be considered eligible for publicity if the Administrative Council deems them likely to meet criteria for New Methodist Denominations in the “Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace through Separation and Restructuring.”
5. This policy does not constrain CFUMC’s ability to hold its own information or discussion sessions regarding the future of the UMC, GC2021, or the denominational affiliation of CFUMC; nor does it constrain CFUMC’s ability to invite any presenters deemed appropriate for such sessions.

Final, Approved 6/9/2020

ATTACHMENT 3:

LGBTQ Aspirational Statement vs. Welcome Statement

Example of an Aspirational Statement: (DRAFT WORDING FOR DISCUSSION)

This congregation is part of the global United Methodist Church (UMC), an entity with a deep history that melds personal discipleship with social activism.

Chelsea First United Methodist Church rejects language in the UMC's current Book of Discipline, stating that "the practice of homosexuality is inconsistent with Christian teaching." We aspire to be part of a UMC in which this language is excised, along with all consequent limits on a person's ability to participate fully in church life. We wait for the global church's decisions on this issue, expected in 2021. In the meantime, while mindful of our obligations to church authority, we strive to make these aspirations a present reality within our congregation.

Example of a "Welcome Statement" (words in bold type, below) – drawn from CFUMC Press Release of 3 7 2019:

Chelsea First United Methodist Church Remains Open and Welcoming to All

The recent decisions made by a special session of the United Methodist Church's General Conference have caused shock and sadness to LGBTQ persons, their families, and their friends, including many of our own parishioners. The Administrative Council of Chelsea First United Methodist Church laments the deep pain that these decisions have caused you. We apologize and continue to welcome you.

Chelsea First United Methodist Church affirms that all persons are individuals of sacred worth and that the ministry of the church is available to all (words from our denomination's constitution). **We boldly proclaim that each human being is made in the image of God. We follow the example of Jesus as we welcome all persons without regard to age, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, or economic condition.**

We are committed to caring for one another within and beyond the walls of our building, to loving and respecting all people, grounded in grace, not judgment. We will continue to proclaim and live according to Jesus' commands: Love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself.