

Chelsea First United Methodist Church

Administrative Council Minutes

April 8, 2021

7:30-9pm via Zoom Conference

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

Guests: Jody Croskey, Jessica Fahlgren, Darrel Noye, Jeanne Franks, Marna Balazer

1. Opening Prayer – Edie Wiarda

Devotion from “The Unsettling Power of Easter,” NY Times, 4/2/2021, by Esau McCaulley, Prof at Wheaton College. He tells the story of growing up in an African American church. At the age of 10 years old he recalls getting his first suit and wearing it to the Easter service. He was sitting next to a woman who was “caught by the holy spirit” and kicked out and ripped the pants of his new suit. That Easter introduced him to the concept of the two Easters that exist together: the hope of new beginnings and the power of God that can unsettle the world. The women at the tomb were trembling and afraid and fled. The women were terrified that Jesus was alive. The writer states that he knows how to live with despair. Hope is much harder to come by. The testimony of the black church is that hope is an unsettling presence. As we return to “normal” we are returning to a world desperately in need of healing. Like the women at the tomb, the scope of this leaves us in stunned silence.

2. Ministry Objectives – Edie Wiarda

a. Metrics and Targets

- i. Meetings were held with Joy Barrett and Mike Vanderspool to generate target numbers for each ministry objective.
- ii. Ministry Objective: Messaging
 1. We won't spend time here because this will fall under the domain of the new person who will be hired to manage this area.
- iii. Ministry Objective: Participation
 1. Average weekly worship attendance-Aiming for a 5% increase by June 2022.

2. Total distinct participants across all ministry areas-Aiming for a 5% increase by June 2022.
 3. Total distinct participants new to Chelsea First-Aiming for 35 new participants split evenly across three target demographic groups (families with young children, near- and newly-retired, elders) by June 2022.
 4. Percent of distinct participants personally invited to join a group or a team-Aim for 50% to be asked by June 2020.
 - iv. Ministry Objective: Going Deep
 1. Get feedback-Conduct three focus groups by April 2022.
 - v. Ministry Objective: Giving
 1. Operating income (pledges and plate) at \$683k for calendar 2022 (a 10% increase over actual for 2020 and 7% over what was originally estimated for 2020 pre-COVID).
 - vi. Discussion, questions, and comments
 1. Nolan-Are we planning to share this with the staff?
 2. Edie-Planning to meet and hammer out the details.
 3. Nolan-How are we planning on tracking the personal invites? What is considered a personal invite?
 4. Edie-Personal invitation involves any mechanism that includes a one-on-one that says, "I thought of you for this because..." This could include an email or verbal communication. The inviter needs to keep track. The way this is tracked needs to be determined. We have time to get that part of it in place.
 5. Rodney-A good example of this is the camping trip that is coming up. There were 31 people who were interested. I am personally contacting those 31 people. I will have the list of the names from the interest survey so I will know who those people are.
3. Proposals & Updates from Path Forward Task Force – Nolan Peterson & Jessica Fahlgren
- a. Survey Results
 - i. We sent out the survey at the beginning of March which asked the congregation how they felt about implementing various inclusive programming for LGBTQIA+.
 - ii. We received 164 responses in total.
 - iii. Overall, 75% Agree/Strongly agree with ideas presented in survey; 11% disagree/Strongly Disagree with ideas presented in survey; the rest were neutral.
 - iv. Survey Comments and Questions

1. Clear communication and more information is needed about how the church is moving forward.
 2. More community outreach is needed to create an inclusive community.
 3. There is a need for education through small groups, in worship, discussions.
 4. Concerns were expressed about addressing this for youth.
 5. Trying to keep it “neutral.”
 6. Allow space for opposing views to be heard.
 7. How will our statement impact the future of our denomination?
 8. Why is it necessary now?
 9. Are we embracing the world’s way and not God’s way?
- v. Discussion
1. Kerry-Did anything from the survey surprise you?
 2. Nolan-Everything played out the way I predicted.
 3. Mike-Could you remind me what a Reconciling Ministries Network is?
 4. Nolan-It is an organization that was made awhile back to lobby for LGBTQIA+ rights within the Methodist Church.
 5. Mike-Is the Reconciling Ministries endorsing one side or the other or just endorsing the church staying together?
 6. Nolan-They are advocating for equal rights regardless of the direction of the church.
 7. Jessica- It is an advocacy organization.
 8. Rodney-At my other church we passed Reconciling Ministries at 88%. When it came time to carry this out through representing it with flags it met with a lot of resistance. People didn’t want to alienate but to be inclusive. People polarized themselves. It may be that people support the movement, they don’t want to be known as alienating any groups.
 9. Nolan-That was the sense that I got too. It seems that people didn’t want to alienate. People seemed to agree with most of it or disagree with most of it. People didn’t seem to be in the middle.
 10. Kerry-I noticed that the St. Paul church has a temporary rainbow banner on the front of their church. That definitely sent a message to me. It gave a powerful message to me about how this church feels without being over the top.
 11. Rodney-We had one outside that said that we were a Reconciling Church. People didn’t want to fly the rainbow

flag. It became a point of contention. We can find ways to send the message. It's just something to consider.

12. Edie-Thank you to the committee for pulling this together with finesse. It took a lot of work and conversation to do it constructively. It was a real service to the congregation.

13. Jessica-I think Ad Council deserves some kudos for taking a risk without having a lot of information or feedback and doing what you were called to do. This survey affirms that what you did was the right thing to do.

14. Joy-I really appreciate the way the task force has reminded us that everyone's opinions should be considered. Just like the church had to stand up and say that racism is wrong, the congregation has to stand up and say that discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people is wrong too.

b. Proposal to Allow Same-Gender Weddings in our Building

- i. The recommendation is that we expand the policy on weddings performed in our building to include "weddings and unions of same-sex couples."
- ii. This does not require any changes to the "Wedding Planning and Requirements" document.
- iii. We are considering a statement of intent that does not infringe on the pastor's ability to decide whether to officiate. This applies to facility use only.
- iv. Jessica-The policy currently states that this must be a christian service, not that the senior pastor has to perform the marriage.
- v. Joy-The policy states that a clergy, or one that has been designated, from our church has to be part of the ceremony but does not have to officiate. One of our clergy is part of every service conducted in our church.

c. Discussion

- i. Edie-Pastor Joy, please give an overview on the appropriateness of this policy and overview of your comfort level.
- ii. Joy-I think it is appropriate to have this discussion. I say this knowing that it will put us in full opposition to the Book of Discipline.
- iii. Mike-What is the proposal? Are we leaving the Wedding Policy as is or adding verbiage to it?
- iv. Edie-The document does not require changes.
- v. Mike-Why do we need to vote on anything?
- vi. Jessica-I think we need to add a footnote where it is stated explicitly.
- vii. Mike-Are we making an amendment?
- viii. Edie-We now define christian marriage as including same-sex couples.

- ix. Mike-Where is that statement going?
- x. Charles-What if we simply, as the Ad Council, acknowledged or confirmed our willingness for same gender marriages to go forward, without changing any documents, with the authority of the Ad Council. It would be the Ad Council, not putting it into any document or guidelines.
- xi. Mike-I just want to be clear about whether we are changing the document or not. This could be accomplished by putting it in the Ad Council minutes. I would like to be clear on the action that is to be taken.
- xii. Edie-There is no change to the document.
- xiii. Mike-Is Jessica okay with that?
- xiv. Jessica-I am okay with that as long as it is publicly known.
- xv. John-I think we are all in agreement with the intent. I am worried about communicating the policy. If it is in the minutes, we would have to research the minutes to find it. If we don't put it in a statement, an addendum, or a footnote, it could be lost six months later. If we wanted to articulate it later it would be hard to find. If it is against the doctrine of the Book of Discipline, if we are going to do all of this, it seems that we should make a stronger statement.
- xvi. Jim-Does the Ad Council have the authority to change that document?
- xvii. Joy-The documents of the church are typically handled by the Ad Council.
- xviii. Mike-The Book of Discipline says what the clergy can do. Does it say how the building can be used?
- xix. Joy-It does say that United Methodist buildings can't be used for same sex marriages.
- xx. Edie-The comments about clear communication are good ones. I had looked at the Wedding Planning and Requirements document as mostly about building use and fees, and so didn't want to burden it with a big policy statement such as we are considering. But I can see adding an addendum to it. On communication, we had talked at a prior meeting about bundling 3 items together into one communication: 1) Change in wedding policy if we adopt it, 2) Path Forward survey results, and 3) info on direction of the United Methodist Church.
- xxi. Jessica-One thing that we talked about in the task force is sharing the results of the survey.
- xxii. Edie-Does that sound like the right communication? How are you feeling about a vote tonight?

- xxiii. Kerry-I feel a sense of urgency to vote tonight. The details about when and how to communicate can be determined later, but the vote should be done tonight.
- xxiv. Nolan-I worry about bundling three things together. Then the topic that we are voting on tonight might get lost.
- xxv. Joy-Putting all of the information together does put it in context. It puts it in alignment for the church and makes a powerful message.
- xxvi. Charles-I think you start with the letter of communication saying that the Ad Council has agreed to facilitate same gender marriage ceremonies in the church, then provide the survey results as support. The rest of the church information could be kept separate. The survey is supporting our directive.
- xxvii. Mike-I've been looking at the document. My feeling is that we could add a statement that would be appropriate in the document. It could go in the beginning of the document.
- xxviii. John-Nolan has a motion that is very articulate. Maybe that should be put in the document.
- xxix. Nolan-"The Administrative Council approves use of the facilities of Chelsea First United Methodist Church for ceremonies of Christian marriage by same-gender couples."
- xxx. Edie-The statement could be included as a footnote at the bottom of the first page with the date. We could take a vote on the intent and work on the wording later.
- xxxi. Heather-Please clarify the language being used.
- xxxii. Nolan-"The Administrative Council approves use of the facilities of Chelsea First United Methodist Church for ceremonies of Christian marriage for all couples regardless of gender."
- xxxiii. Edie-Can we go with that language? Can we decide to place it as a footnote at the bottom of the first page? Or at the bottom of "Additional Important Notes."
- xxxiv. Nolan-I think it should go in the "Additional Notes."
- d. Motion-"The Administrative Council approves use of the facilities of Chelsea First United Methodist Church for ceremonies of Christian marriage for all couples regardless of gender." This statement will be placed in the Wedding Planning and Requirements document under "Additional Important Notes."
 - i. The motion passes unanimously.

4. Reports & Updates:

- a. Finance— Kerry Plank
 - i. First quarter has no concerns within either income or expenses.
 - ii. The committee is planning to execute a mini fundraiser to pay off the \$65,000 mortgage balloon payment.

- b. SPRC-John Seto
 - i. The committee had some delays in hiring for the Communication Specialist Position.
 - ii. An offer was made to Katy Tinsley.
 - iii. She would rather serve as a volunteer than as a paid employee.
 - iv. We worked out the details in shifting of the position's salary to promote programs within communications.
 - v. The committee is working on next steps to make an announcement to the church.

- c. Congregational Care-Edie
 - i. A group met this week to discuss training, what the committee has done in the past, and a possible direction going forward.
 - ii. A core team was established.
 - iii. There will be more to report on this later.

5. Final Discussion

- a. Jessica-Everything that was discussed tonight would be a tremendous opportunity for the church to communicate to the larger community.
- b. Guest Comments
 - i. Darrel-Communicating thanks from the task force.
 - ii. Marna-It has been a privilege to be part of the task force. Thank you for being open to our suggestions.

6. Closing Prayer

Upcoming Meetings:

- May 13 7:30-9 – Safe Sanctuaries policy
- June 10 7:30-9