

Hamline Church United Methodist – Church Council Meeting Minutes
March 28, 2023 - 7:00 p.m.

Attendance: Rev. Mariah Furness Tollgaard, Angela Wolf Scott, Rachel Joyeux, Stephanie Engebrecht, Jay Alexander, Kristin Prucell, Jeff Dreisbach, Pete Theisen, Stephanie Jones, Adine Momoh, Janet Beneke.

Welcome & Check-In

Chair Angela Wolf Scott opened the meeting with an icebreaker.

Consent Agenda

The council considered the Consent Agenda, which included February Minutes and the Plaster Repair Recommendation. Jeff Dreisbach mentioned that the plaster repairs may not hit the April 30 deadline, but this is not the priority. Pete Theisen made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda in its entirety. Jeff seconded the motion. The motion was accepted unanimously.

Discussion Agenda

Angela opened the discussion on the Security Plan & Assessment Report. Pastor Mariah Furness Tollgaard explained that this plan is the culmination of work began in 2021. She said we began working with Chris Carr of Daikon Security LLC, and he walked us through the new, better, and best practices for our church, as well as training modules offered during 2022. Staff, Childcare Staff, and worship volunteers were part of the training modules. So, several people are up to date on these practices. Chris also provided a security assessment in addition to the Emergency Plan. Stephanie Engebrecht jumped in to discuss the Emergency Response and Action Plan; it is being worked on so it could be distributed more widely among new employees (such as childcare workers, etc), while a more complete version would still contain sensitive information. Jay Alexander asked how many people have been trained, who is the lead person tracking that training, and how are new employees trained-in? Stephanie is responsible for tracking and offering security and CPR trainings, so it's available to new employees and members of the church, with at least one session a year. Pastor Mariah said one training session had around 15-20 people, and a second more specific to large gatherings had a smaller group. A recent First Aid training had eight people from the church, including key ushers and interested church members. Pastor Mariah also mentioned the Minnesota Conference provides training that is an option. Our Safe Sanctuaries training is very strong, and Pastor Mariah said she is confident we're following these practices as best we can. Pete asked if there are images or posters for reference during an emergency, and Stephanie said it is an action item they're working on. Jeff mentioned having an AE machine, and it was noted there is one on the premises.

Pastor Mariah addressed the Security Assessment, which the safety committee has discussed and considered how to take action on recommendations like tracking hard keys, building access, etc. Some items need action over the next year such as barricades for traffic in the parking lot, securing knives in the kitchen, and a light on the back side of the church. Some more expensive items like motion sensors have been bookmarked for a later date. Adine Momoh mentioned the guide (attachment 4a) is very helpful for going forward. Pastor Mariah said they would come back to the council for approval for more expensive upgrades. Adine said the assessment suggests a committee or taskforce to regularly discuss security issues. Pastor Mariah, Angie, Jeff, Stephanie, and Adine previously discussed this informally, but Adine would like to formalize it – specifically a group that includes a council rep, laity, and staff. Pastor Mariah said maybe the Council could help identify roles for this committee. Jay complimented the

report, noting it is very comprehensive. Pete asked if there's a close link between Hamline University and the Church – for example, would each be rapidly informed if there was a threat to one or the other? Pastor Mariah affirmed that there is communication between the two, but that could be strengthened. She reiterated there is opportunity to join the committee, and to contact her or Stephanie to join.

Moving on to the memorial gift for playground, Pastor Mariah informed the committee about a gift from Carl Schwichtenberg and his wife after his passing at the end of January. The memorial funds that came in were more substantial than usual, and his wife asked if there was a need, with some interest in sprucing up the playground. Pastor Mariah proposed authorizing the funds to secure a contractor for playground ground cover repair and move forward with work up to \$8,000. Rachel Joyeux asked if we could use this donation as leverage to fundraise to do more with the playground. Pastor Mariah said the need is immediate, and that may be a possibility once we start working with a contractor and find out about the possibilities. Angela said if it's a reoccurring issue, then surface treatment may not fix the problem. Pastor Mariah said it has not really been an ongoing issue, but it has arisen over the past few years. Angela said maybe drainage modifications might help to solve the problem. Jeff suggested querying members to get started. Adine asked if these funds are earmarked only for the playground, or if they might be allocated to a higher priority item such as security. Pastor Mariah confirmed that the additional money would be allocated from the designated Memorial Fund. Adine made a motion to approve funds up to \$8,000 to get started looking for contractors, which includes memorial funds and additional funds. Pete seconded the motion, and the council voted unanimously to accept the motion.

Pastor Mariah moved on to discuss the letter Midwest Child Development sent this week. In recent conversation Pastor Mariah discovered the owners were really seeking someone to buy the business from them, but so far to no avail. Angela Kapp more recently hired someone to manage the HCUM branch, so they can finish out the lease. They are now asking to reduce their rent, dropping a room. Pastor Mariah consulted with the Council leadership and finance team, and they decided to reduce their rent by \$1000 a month, starting June 2023. This way, the loss is minimal and spread out over two Church budgets (2023/2024). Adine asked how it would be communicated to them. Pastor Mariah prefers to send a letter back to them, rather than an addendum; Adine said it should be somewhat nuanced since we're doing them a favor, there's a specific number we're working with (\$1000), and we don't want a counteroffer that is higher. As such, she said it makes sense to be very specific about our number, and the logic behind it, and that it's not open to negotiation. They may also need to hear that it could have been as low as \$650, so they know this is a generous offer and the highest we're going. Nathaniel Dempsey mentioned it may help to mention that we're working on improving the playground. Pastor Mariah said we will need to get an assessment of their rooms, so we can budget for any upgrades next year. Rachel made a motion to send a letter to MCD reducing their rent by \$1,000 a month, beginning in June 2023. Kristin Purcell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

In May, the leadership would like to broadly recognize volunteers and staff who have made meaningful contributions to the church. Pastor Mariah asked the council about meaningful ways to show and receive appreciation. Kristin mentioned she appreciates the personal notes that sometimes come in the mail (for birthdays, etc). The council discussed ways to show appreciation: a special coffee hour; a children-led art project or song; interactive notes in the bulletin where we could recognize volunteers by collecting them on the wall and then distributing them at the end of the month; a Saints Baseball night where volunteers get 2 tickets. Rachel mentioned we could identify long-time volunteers by name each week, but also allow volunteers to self-identify for tickets. Stephanie Jones mentioned calling on volunteers to stand and be recognized, which means they could opt out too. Kristin said someone like Eileen could be honored by many of the people she helped get married, three of whom are on Council!

Jay said it would be good to have a meeting with SPRC in the coming weeks to move forward on it. Adine said if we're considering length of service, we need to consider length of service at other churches as well, such as Church of the Good Shepherd.

Pete asked if there will be an update from the Dining Hall committee for 2023. Pastor Mariah said council chairs were going to reach out to them, but just as a nudge since there are many things we will need to partner with them on.

Jay made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Nathaniel seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Follow Up Steps

Council Leadership – to meet with Dining Hall committee leadership, succession planning for new council members, planning for visioning process.

SPRC – support and participate in planning of appreciation events

Finance – review finance manual for annual calendar tasks

Trustees – prepare report on Energy Audit with Earthkeepers for April Council Meeting

The next Church Council meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 25, 2023, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.