

**Hamline Church United Methodist
Church Council Meeting Minutes
August 22, 2023 - 7:00 p.m.**

Attendance: Rev. Mariah Furness Tollgaard, Kyle Pennington, Rachel Joyeux, Jay Alexander, Emma Close, Stephanie Jones, Stephanie Engebrecht, Jeff Dreisbach, Natalie Wiersma, Pete Theisen, Kirstin Purcell, Ellen Schrader, Rev. Heather Grantham.

Others in Attendance: Sharon Fields, Gil Young, Paul Klinger, Barbara Metzger, Jan Bajuniemi.

Introductions

Kyle Pennington opened the meeting and asked everyone to briefly introduce themselves and share what they're excited about this coming fall.

**Approval of Candidacy of Sharon Fields for Ordained Ministry:
Convene as Charge Conference**

The council officially convened to approve Sharon Fields as a candidate for ordination to the ministry. Pastor Mariah Furness Tollgaard expressed that it's an important time, and that this is the first time we have met to approve a candidate from our own congregation to move towards ordination. Sharon Fields is currently in seminary, and we are the first approval in the process as she continues on her journey for ordination. She has already gone through a primary vetting process by the SPRC.

Sharon shared her motivation and personal journey. Jay Alexander spoke on behalf of the SPRC, stating that there is strong support for her initiative and her path forward, and she has 100% backing from the SPRC. Kirsten Purcell concurred, noting how much experience she brings, as well as a unique perspective. Pastor Mariah opened the floor to questions for Sharon, first sharing a supportive statement from member Mark Kreuger. Jan Bajuniemi shared her experience working with Sharon on the Finance Committee and expressed her support. Gil Young also contributed his experience working with Sharon on the Healthy Church Initiative, noting her dedication, effectiveness, commitment, and compassion; he observed that Sharon has changed the church, just as the church has changed her. Heather Grantham spoke up, remembering Sharon's dedication and resourcefulness for the rainbow open doors installation on the front lawn, and that she has been persistent in demanding more from the church for the LGBT community. Paul Klinger shared his experience in a small group that she led, noting how well she can handle unpredictable elements and leave space for conversation. Emma Close characterized Sharon as the embodiment of the spirit needed for this calling. Kyle noted how welcoming she was as a council Chair mentor, her dedication to the church despite all the other aspects of her life, and the high quality of her sermons. Pastor Mariah noted how the church was at a financial deficit when she joined, but Sharon and Mark's can-do attitudes really

allowed the church to shift out of a scarcity mindset towards significant financial stability. She expressed her disappointment that the division in our denomination has delayed that progress.

The church conference took a written ballot and approved her candidacy in a unanimous vote, with 14 approving. Pastor Mariah congratulated her and blessed her journey with a prayer.

Church Council Meeting

Kyle opened the floor for questions on the Consent Agenda, which included June minutes, a Spiritual Direction Growth Grant, a VBS Swale Project Growth Grant, and a Parental Leave Request. Pastor Mariah shared that Janine would begin her parental leave now due to unexpected medical circumstances around the pregnancy. Jay made a motion to accept the consent agenda in its entirety. Pete Theisen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion Agenda

Pastor Mariah shared a Fall Preview as we move out of summertime. She reviewed the church's goals and several upcoming events this fall, noting certain events that target our overall goals of Worship, Service, Connection and Caring, Spiritual Formation, and Foundations for Ministry.

Pastor Heather spoke about Spiritual Formation: as small groups are part of the Wesleyan way, this year groups are set up to dig deeper and give people a sort of milestone to focus on throughout the year. Pastor Mariah added that she and Katie are beginning the process with Ministry Architects so that the church continues to grow in what we offer to members. Also they are considering how to make Wednesday nights a more sustainable night for the church, with all the various groups meeting. She also mentioned there is a property assessment and an energy audit ongoing this year, and the ongoing process of working out a new lease with the new childcare provider (Miracle Grow) in the basement.

Trustees Report & Update

Stephanie Engebrecht jumped in to review the Trustees Report. Wellington began work today installing elements of the security system. The playground resurfacing has also begun. They are working with the window repair crew to remedy the issue of plaster that has sealed the window. Otherwise, the grounds have been improved significantly this summer, and we've gotten some free lighting upgrades related to the energy audit. September 10th will be the accessibility listening session. Rachel Joyeux asked why we are obligated to pay for the mistakes made on the plastering around the windows, and Pastor Mariah said it's still being discussed, so we haven't yet committed to just paying for the repairs – they're trying to handle it as diplomatically as possible given these are long term contractors. Pete asked about the current security system and upgrades, and Stephanie shared some specifics.

Outgoing council members were warmly thanked for their three years of service on the council: Jay Alexander, Jeff Dreisbach, Rachel Joyeux. New member possibilities were considered, and

the possibility of moving the meeting to the 4th Monday of the month. For now, the next meeting is scheduled for September 26 at 7:00 p.m. by Zoom.

Kyle asked for a motion to close the meeting. Jeff made a motion to close the meeting, Jay seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Follow Up Tasks

SPRC - begin planning for 2024 salaries for budget

Finance - begin planning for annual giving campaign and 2024 budget

Trustees - next steps with accessibility task force

Next Meeting – Tuesday, September 26, 7pm

Additional Resources:

[Candidacy process and requirements](#)