

**Hamline Church United Methodist
Church Council Meeting Minutes
January 23, 2024 - 7:00 p.m.**

Attendance: Rev. Mariah Furness Tollgaard, Angela Wolf Scott (Moderator), Gil Young (Secretary), Kyle Pennington, Emma Close, Janet Beneke, Stephanie Jones, Pete Theisen, Kirstin Purcell, Adine Momoh Baillet, Aaron Anderson, Carole Anderson, Priscilla Luitjens

Others Attending: Stephanie Engebrecht, Trudy Dunham

Introductions

Angela Wolf Scott opened the meeting and asked everyone to briefly describe something they had learned recently.

Consent Agenda

Angela Wolf Scott asked the council to consider the Consent Agenda, which included the minutes of the December electronic vote, the Z Systems contract for upgrading the sanctuary sound system, a Growth Grant submitted by Betsey Hodson to provide art supplies for an art making workshop, and renewal of the Loeffler Printing contract. Adine Momoh Baillet moved to accept the Consent Agenda in its entirety. Pete Theisen seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Discussion Agenda

Hamline Church is in the process of studying and developing a better understanding of the history of the land our church currently resides upon out of a desire to learn to walk on this earth with respect, gentleness, and purpose. Trudy Dunham spoke regarding this initiative and a potential Land Acknowledgement statement. This initiative is led by the Hamline Earthkeepers as part of their broad stewardship of all creation, including victims of discrimination. In the fall of 2023, the Council approved a growth grant to study the issue. Mariah noted that Land Acknowledgement will be the 2023 Lenten theme. Trudy acknowledged that this is a journey for the church and could be a long process. Jim Bear Jacobs, an ordained Presbyterian minister has been tasked with reviewing Hamline's draft land acknowledgement statement. The Earthkeepers have requested a Growth Grant in the amount of \$3,500 that will fund a Sacred Sites Tour with the Minnesota Council of Churches (\$1,500), a contract with Intermill Land History Consulting to research the history of treaties on land currently held by Hamline Church, along with two prior locations (the sites of Market Street Methodist Episcopal Church and the Church of the Good Shepherd) (\$725), and guest speaker honoraria during Lent (\$700 - \$1,000). Adine Momoh Baillet suggested that the Earthkeepers reach out to Hamline University to see if they would be interested in partnering on the treaty research, since their land is adjacent to Hamline Church. Emma Close stated that she might have a contact for that partnership. Trudy indicated that she would pursue that option. Kyle Pennington moved that the growth grant be approved as submitted. Emma seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Financial Reports

Janet Beneke reviewed the 2023 budget. Hamline was \$25,000 under budget on anticipated expenses, and \$50,000 ahead in non-pledged offerings. We were below plan on earned income because our childcare services provider was not paying rent during all of 2023.

Pete Theisen next reviewed the 2024 budget. We expect an increase of \$115,000 in income, with \$30,000 coming from the federal ERC program, \$30,000 from increased pledges, and much of the remainder from the gift fund. Most of the increase in expected expenses comes from increased personnel costs and the creation of the executive officer position. The Finance Committee is pursuing options for ways to earn interest on the \$200,000+ currently in designated funds. The new executive officer may be able to help make this happen. The Council gave its verbal approval of this initiative.

Angela requested a motion to approve the 2024 endowment withdrawal of \$54,000 into the operating budget and dedicated funds. Carole Anderson moved to approve the request. Aaron Anderson seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Childcare Lease Update

Pastor Mariah provided an update on the ongoing negotiations with Miracle Grow Learning Academy on a long-term lease of the facility for providing daycare services. The two parties are about \$1,000/month apart on their proposals. Miracle Grow is also interested in renting a fourth room (the Activity Room off the Community Center) and Community Kitchen. Pastor Mariah stated that she is concerned that renting out those spaces could limit our ability to use those spaces for other purposes. Mariah and Stephanie Engebrecht are scheduled to meet with the owner of Miracle Grow on Monday, January 29th. Both sides hope to have a final agreement by February 1st.

Meanwhile, Hamline is negotiating a lease listing agreement with CBRE, a real estate firm. After reviewing the property, CBRE claims that the daycare space is worth more than Hamline is currently asking for, particularly because the space is move-in ready and approved for licensing. Having a listing agreement with CBRE would provide more options for Hamline should an agreement with Miracle Grow fall through.

Pastor Mariah requested a motion to approve the contract with CBRE. The agreement would not be exercised if an agreement with Miracle Grow is reached soon. Pete Theisen made the motion. Aaron Anderson seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

SPRC – closed session

Pastor Mariah convened a meeting of the SPRC. Non-council members were dismissed. Pastor Mariah announced that several individuals applied for the position of Executive Director of Operations. Two candidates were selected to interview. The process is on track to have someone in place by March 1st.

Betsy Hodson has requested that her hours be reduced from 25 hours per week to 20, so that she can pursue other interests. Pastor Mariah stated that this change was reasonable, although the change could mean that Betsy would have less time to be involved in special projects, and her compensation would be reduced commensurately. This change can occur without Council approval.

Stephanie Engebrecht has asked that their custodial responsibilities be removed so that their work hours could be reduced. Stephanie would continue to do jobs such as meeting room setup and some groundskeeping work. This change would require that the church hire a custodian, either as an individual hire or through a custodial service. The custodial position would be flexible hours for 10-12 hours per week. The Council reviewed the Custodian job description and decided to leave the current draft unchanged. Mariah requested a motion to approve the posting of the custodial position. Carole Anderson moved the motion and Adine Momoh seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Pastor Mariah noted that a lay staff person was concerned that high health insurance costs were outpacing their salary increases over the last two years. They claimed that after accounting for health insurance costs, their overall salary increased by only 1% per year. Mariah suggested that Hamline Church consider alternatives to the current policy of providing health insurance benefits through the United Methodist church and instead allow staff to buy health insurance on the open market, while increasing their salaries to help cover these expenses. The Council gave verbal approval for Mariah to explore options.

Angela Wolf Scott adjourned the meeting at 8:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Gil Young