

Hamline Church United Methodist - Church Council Meeting Minutes
June 27, 2023 - 7:00pm via Zoom

Attendance: Rev. Mariah Furness Tollgaard, Angela Wolf Scott, Rachel Joyeux, Stephanie Engebrecht, Jeff Dreisbach, Pete Theisen, Stephanie Jones, Adine Momoh, Janet Beneke, Heather Grantham, Katie Morris, Natalie Wiersma, Nathaniel Dempsey, Emma Close.

Also in attendance: Gil Young, Sharon Fields.

Welcome & Check-In

Kyle Pennington chaired the meeting, and opened it with a question to everyone to share what they're most excited about for the summer.

Consent Agenda

Kyle asked for a vote on the Consent Agenda, which included the May Minutes (electronic vote), a Contract Approval for the playground, a Growth Grant from Katie Morris, and the Wellington Security System proposal. Pete made a motion to accept the consent agenda in its entirety, Jeff Dreisbach seconded the motion. The council voted unanimously to accept the Consent Agenda.

Discussion Agenda

Pastor Mariah Furness Tollgaard began the discussion on the Children & Youth Ministry Consultant Proposal, prefacing the conversation by noting that Children's ministry is struggling across ministries due to the pandemic, but we are also in a position of growth, with new families and children arriving. We're facing many of the same problems as before the pandemic, including staffing and Youth programming, specifically how to bridge between children's and youth ministry post-confirmation. Pastor Mariah notes this is the right time seek some guidance, since Katie Morris is on staff and has the knowledge and ability to implement a new plan and best practices. After consulting with a number of entities, Ministry Architects seems like the best fit for visioning and strategic planning in Children's Ministry, and they have a strong reputation in the church consulting realm. Katie jumped in to explain why they are the best fit; she spoke with many different individuals and organizations, and she was frequently directed to MA. They offer 4 tiers of packages, their services are very specific, involve an assessment and a report, followed up by some assistance in implementing the plan. They will be able to quickly help to make changes, and the congregation will be included in the process. They provide volunteering software that will match people with opportunities. They provide coaching for the ministry as well to help implement the plan. Pastor Mariah added that the consultant's advice may add more weight with the congregation to any changes we make.

Kyle asked why that particular level was chosen, and not one of the more thorough packages. Katie said they chose the most valuable aspects and asked for the leadership option. Some other options were lacking the focus on Youth programs, and crafting a Mission Statement for the children's program was also important. Stephanie Jones asked how involved the kids would be in the process, and Katie said the initial assessment will invite youth to provide feedback, and Katie would want representatives among the youth on the committee as well. Gil Young asked Stephanie what she would like to see change, and she said revitalizing the youth group, and more of a community among the youth. Pastor Mariah noted that our youth are at different schools and are very active in extracurricular activities, so there's some difficulty getting that bond in place. However, youth trips have helped with that. She also noted that two years ago, Katie's position seemed like a financial stretch, but while funds were allocated to support

the position from the Rosene fund, we've been able to meet the budget without using that supplemental money, so it can be used here and still satisfy the original intentions for the fund. Rachel Joyeux commented that this sounds like a great investment and wondered about the ongoing cost of the volunteer software. Katie said it would be a yearly subscription at \$260, after the initial 15 months are completed. Kyle asked for a motion to adopt the recommendation to hire the Ministry Architects. Angela Wolf Scott moved to accept the recommendation, Emma seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Katie said the consultancy would begin in August.

Pastor Mariah summarized the history of the MCD tenancy and said that Brandy Henry, of Miracle Grow Learning Academy, approached the church about taking over the space for her daycare. Brandy and Angela of MCD have worked out an agreement where the latter will transition the MCD operation to Brandy's business. Then Brandy would start a new lease with HCUM for January 1, 2024, which would hopefully last 5 years. Tonight we are looking to discuss and possibly approve a lease for Miracle Grow. Stephanie Engebrecht said this plan, and having a tenant, really saves us a lot of money, and allows us to avoid having to get reassessed by the city. Pastor Mariah noted we wouldn't normally need a fire-suppressant system assessment under the current licensing for MCD, but they would be harder on a brand-new entity/license. Pete asked if MCD will still owe rental payments to get the \$1000 rent reduction, and how that transfers to the next tenant. Pastor Mariah said there's a possibility we may want to give Brandy a discount for the first 6 months, and she may need all four rooms. We will likely charge her at the current rate, if not a little higher, but with a discount for the first 6 months. Kyle reiterated that this is very good news for us, and Pastor Mariah emphasized that Brandy has a great track record at running businesses. We will likely increase the personal guarantee since it's not an existing business, and not transferring over clients, just to protect us a bit. Kyle asked for a motion to approve moving forward to develop a lease agreement with Brandy Henry and Miracle Grow Learning Academy, with a likely January 1, 2024 start date. Janet Beneke made a motion, and Rachel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Pete gave a quick financial update. We're in a good situation, with good income levels at \$20,000 ahead. Pledges are ahead – both planned and unplanned offerings. Expenses are still on track, it's the income that is exceptional and there are still some opportunities to increase that income through interest bearing accounts. We are investigating the possibility of the Employee Retention Credit, in particular because we lost so much income from the Dining Hall in the two years we were closed or only selling ice cream.

Jeff Dreisbach summarized the Accessibility Survey, noting that he's proud of the church for taking disability seriously. He reviewed some of the more recent additions to the church but said that the rules continue to change over the years, and the church will need to keep up with them. Following a complaint from a visitor, Mo Freberg completed the assessment last week and with Jeff, noted the time frame for each. Pastor Mariah said they hoped to raise awareness about the need to make these upgrades, and it will go hand in hand with the facility audit and energy assessment in terms of budgeting. The council discussed a few different areas that could be improved, including upgrading the bathrooms to be more spacious and accommodate walkers and wheelchairs. Pastor Mariah said one of our biggest needed upgrades is the sound system in the church, which is about 30-40 years old.

Follow Up Tasks

Finance

-Continue investigation of Employee Retention Credit options: Pete is working with an outside consultant to investigate this.

Trustees

-Gather and review sanctuary sound and lighting proposals.

Council Leadership

New council member nominations are open.

Kyle asked for a motion to close the meeting. Pete moved to close the meeting. Nathaniel seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

There is no Council meeting in July. The next Church Council meeting will be in person on Tuesday, August 22 at 7 p.m. for outgoing and incoming members.