

**MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA  
MINUTES OF THE CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL  
SEPTEMBER 10, 2023**

**Members Present:** Jon Driskill, Mike Driskill, Rachel Rushworth-Hollander, Angela Kronau, Sharon Sweeney, Pastor Susan Thisell, Michele Wilson

**Members Absent:** Becky Breeden, Jack Wilder, Debbie Hampstead, Steve Hess

**1. Call to Order:** Mike Driskill called the meeting to order at 11:55 am and we enjoyed a delicious Petro's lunch provided by Jon and Anne Driskill. Angela provided an opening devotion (Christ in Our Home – How to Live As Christ Followers [Romans 13]). Pastor Susan blessed the meal.

Moving forward the President of Council will send a reminder to the person who has signed up to provide the meal and devotion and it will be included in the prior months' minutes. Next month, the meal and devotion will be provided by Rachel Rushworth-Hollander.

**2. Approval of Minutes:** A motion was made by Angela Kronau and seconded by Sharon Sweeney to approve the minutes of the August 2023 meeting. Motion carried.

**3. Correspondence:** Correspondence was included in the Council packet for our information.

**4. Leadership Meeting Feedback and Follow-Up:** All in attendance considered this to be a great use of our time to discuss supporting our various ministries. In the future, it probably is best to NOT combine it with a Council meeting as the meeting was very long. After Michele Wilson provided the minutes to Rachel Rushworth-Hollander, Rachel created a terrific visual piece that will help our congregation see how our committees work together and where they can see a 'place for them' within the structure. Michele will have this graphic printed in a very large format to be on display. Michele will add a QR code so that folks can scan it and view it on their phones, if they wish. This image will also be used as a follow-up piece to those who complete a Offering of Time & Abilities survey.

**5. Building Request(s):**

- Council approved the request that was received by the Embroiders Guild for their Rummage Sale. Mike Driskill will communicate to Kristin Kennedy that the items dropped off for the rummage sale will need to be kept in a limited and specific area, as opposed to a large area in the Fellowship Hall because the Teach Group used the Fellowship Hall for the children's recess time when the weather outside isn't accommodating.
- Council approved a request for a member to rent tables and chairs for an off-site special event (wedding) on Saturday, June 8, 2024. Council approved the rental.

The fee will be \$50 with an understanding that if damaged, the member will replace the item. The member is expected to pick up and bring back the tables and chairs [that will be tagged] in a reasonable amount of time.

## **6. Monthly Reports:**

- **Building Use Fees for Outside Groups and Church Members – Updating of Fees**
  - Outside Groups: Increase the fee from \$45 for two hours to \$50 for two hours.
  - Church Members: Increase the fee from \$25 for two hours to \$30 for two hours.

The motion was made by Michele Wilson and Rachel Rushworth-Hollander seconded. The motion carried.

- **Building Use Fees for the Embroiders Guild.** In 2023 they paid a group a flat fee of \$930 annually. A motion was made by Jon Driskill to charge the group a flat rate of \$1200 and Rachel seconded. The motion carried. This group will continue to pay for additional building use time outside of their standard meetings.
- **Property** - Jon discussed the humidity issue in the Senior High School room. Archer Air came on Friday, September 8 and there is a key piece missing with the valves. Dehumidification isn't happening downstairs. At their suggestion, Jon has turned fans on to help with the circulation of air. Archer Air is looking at potential options. Will Archer Air bear some responsibility? Probably not. Are the dehumidifiers we own working? No. They ran continuously and simply wore out. We will look at getting another dehumidifier to help bring the humidity down from 80%. This is a band-aid. Mike will ask Ernie Hudgins, Engineer, to come in and consult. Mike has volunteered to pay his fee.

## **7. Information Updates:**

- **Trees** - Thanks again to the anonymous donors. Their name needs to be redacted from the Property report.
- **Acquisition of lights** – The bulbs have been received and are in Jon Driskill's possession. A day/time for installation will be decided upon.
- **Nominating Committee** – Many thanks for Rachel Rushworth-Hollander for her excellent temple talk regarding serving on Council. The first meeting of this group will be on October 8<sup>th</sup>.
- **December 2023 Wedding** – No longer a discussion item. Our church isn't needed.
- **Sponsorship of Boy Scout Troop** – On Wednesday, September 6<sup>th</sup> several Council members (Mike Driskill, Angela Kronau, and Jon Driskill) met with members of the troop leadership. The overall sentiment after the meeting is that

we should proceed in considering this partnership. The Boy Scouts has gone through a major transition. They filed Chapter 11 after the Boy Scouts of America starting welcoming females and members of the LGBTQIA+ community. This troop isn't being welcomed at their current Methodist church because of the same issues. The troop is looking at other churches (All Saints Cathedral and West Hills Baptist Church). These are additional talking points/questions we'd like more information on before the October Council meeting.

- We need to find out what fee they currently pay their 'host'.
- Jon recommended that the 'Messiah person' who serves as the Troop/Church contact person would also serve as part of Council in order to facilitate positive communication. Discussion led to a concern that this request may be a challenge because we have a hard time recruiting volunteers.
- Concerns around liability were discussed. The forms that have been provided have been shared with Beth Ford and Tom Cole, attorneys who are members at Messiah.
- Mike Driskill will ask Shannon Waller if she will still be involved with the troop after Logan Waller (her son) 'ages out'.
- Jon Driskill asked that someone contact the insurance company to check the liability issues.
- Mike Driskill will contact Synod to get their feedback / approval.
- Sharon Sweeney asked about COVID concerns re-emerging. If there is any health-issue, we will share with this group that we will follow CDC guidelines.

The Council affirmed that we will continue to be interested in hosting this Boy Scout troop. The benefits include that this could help by adding young members to our flock. Troop leadership expressed excitement about projects and helping the church.

**8. Offering QR Code:** Angela Kronau asked of the Offering QR code can be added to the page within the bulletin at the point when the offering is collected. Pastor Susan said that it depends on what is already in the bulletin. Rachel suggested adding it to the blank space next to the word Offering or in the footer. Pastor Susan will ask Kristin Kennedy, church Administrative Assistant to try to get this added, with the understanding that spacing is an issue at times.

**9. Financial Committee:** Council received an email from Steve Hess, Treasurer, with this information and recommendations (italicized):

*At this current level I recommend reducing some spending to below plan in **September** to maintain the financial health of the church as follows:*

- *Reduce Discretionary external Giving as follows:*
- *Discontinue UT Campus giving till the end of 2023 - \$100/mo.*

- *Discontinue World Hunger Giving till the end of year - \$100/mo.*
- *Reduce Synod giving by half until Further notice – Reduce from \$1,540/mo. (over plan) to \$770/mo. (under plan).*
- *We will advise recipients of our needed adjustments.*
- *This will reduce monthly spending by \$970/mo.*
- *Do not move forward with any general fund continuing education for the balance of 2023.*
- *Do not move forward with any General fund spending that is not essential for the balance of 2023.*
- *Further reductions in planned expenses may be needed in the next months and into next year to re-establish a healthy unrestricted cash balance of 30K around 4 weeks' worth.*
- *This will add \$3880 back to unrestricted funds by year end.*

The Council was asked to confirm their agreement with these financial health recommendations, but those present were unable to do so. Great appreciation was shared for Steve Hess and his service and thoughtfulness toward offering his recommendations. He is a willing and passionate servant as our church treasurer. Feedback from Council members included:

- We must show faith in God and our members that we can fulfill our mission and not cut back on our ministries.
- We need to figure out ways to stretch our money. Let's work more closely with our committee liaisons to find cost-saving measures.
- We need more information from the Finance committee / treasurer than what has been provided in the email to make drastic changes.
- For the last 2 years a 'we're running out of money' letter has been sent to the Congregation and folks have responded to these requests. But can we do this year after year?
- The building is a huge concern. Is it being proposed that \$17,000 be taken out of the General Fund and parked into it's own fund as a 'just in case' fund? This wasn't popular. We need to emphasize the folks need to keep giving to the General Fund, but consider an ADDITIONAL gift to the newly established Building & Maintenance Fund. This fund had just over \$700 in it (because a few people are giving monthly gifts to it). And it was money that was well spent on lighting when Jon Driskill came upon a highly discounted price for light bulbs. We will focus our messaging in this direction. Michele and Rachel are also working on an 'auction' concept for people to purchase specific need items / focus on rooms and spaces within our church building for people to support. This will begin after the October Stewardship drive.
- One of the largest expenses we incur each month is our mortgage.
- ACTION: Council approved a motion to ask the Finance Committee to look into options to potentially refinance our mortgage (smaller monthly payments over a

longer period of time) to save monthly and not have to sacrifice the work that is important to our church. Once that information has been obtained and shared with Council, next steps can be discussed. The Council is asking for this information prior to the October 2023 Council meeting.

- **ACTION:** Council is asking the Finance committee to explore that 30% of the Building Use Fees go directly to the Building and Maintenance Fund and the remaining go to the General Fund. Currently 100% of Building Use Fees goes to the General Fund.

**10. Monthly Parochial Report:** Moving forward, Pastor Susan will complete this report quarterly. Next quarter will be basically an annual report since it will be in the December 2023 packet.

**11. Red Attendance Books:** Jon noted that several of the red attendance books in the Sanctuary are empty. Angela volunteered to connect with Kristin to order more page inserts. This led to a discussion about our online numbers. Michele reported how the number is determined, but that unless someone makes a comment in the Facebook Live chat box, there is no way to know who is watching. Pastor Susan would like to know which of our online viewers is also a giver to the church. Jon will work with the media team to add the following to the 'Welcome' screen at the beginning of each worship service. They, with this information, Jon Toth will be able to give Pastor Susan a general idea of who is giving. Note: Name of donors aren't shared outside of Jon Toth and the tellers.

"Please say hello in the chat box! If you have a private concern, please send a direct message to [pastorsusan@messiahknoxville.org](mailto:pastorsusan@messiahknoxville.org)."

**12. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 1:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Wilson  
Council Member

**REMINDER:** Rachel Rushworth-Hollander will provide the devotion and meal at the next Council meeting on Sunday, October 15<sup>th</sup>.