MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA

MINUTES OF THE CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL

Sunday, Feb. 20, 2022

12:30 PM in person at Messiah Lutheran Church.

Present In Person: Council President Debbie Hampstead, Council Secretary Sharon Sweeney, Becky Breeden, Tom Cole, Jon Driskill, Andrew Lauber, Cristall Mount, Rachel Rushworth-Hollander, Pastor Susan Thisell, Andy Waller, Michele Wilson. Also present: Doug Mason and Jane Mason.

Absent: Mike Driskill.

Council conducted two votes by email between the January and February meeting dates.

1. Council voted to renew the copier lease for five years with Centriworks, a company the church has had for the past 25 years. The company is lowering the per copy cost, resulting in a savings of approximately $147.25 per week.
2. Council approved the salary for John Brock as interim Director of Music. The salary approved was $200 per week for the first two weeks as organist only, and $400 per week as interim Director of Music thereafter. The amount is approximately 2/3 of the salary of the previous Director of Music.

Council Business:

1. Devotions were provided by Michele Wilson, about Finding Unity in the Body of Believers.
2. Council minutes of the January 2022 meeting were included in the Council packet for review. Motion to approve by Rachel Rushworth-Hollander; seconded by Michele Wilson. Motion carried.
3. Discussion of Blue Christmas presented by Jane Mason. This is a service traditionally on the winter solstice, the longest night of the year. The candlelight service of lament and healing allows people who have lost loved ones in the past year or years to come together in community and celebrate the birth of Jesus with a liturgy that speaks to loneliness and grieving. Messiah has had services in 2020 via Zoom and 2021 via Facebook Live. This year, the team wants to open the service to the community, with a service Dec. 18 at 3 p.m. live and on Facebook live, with a Zoom breakout room for people who would like to share their experiences. Someone may be invited to provide contemporary music; a request for funding may be presented at a later date for possible use of the Creekmore Fund. No action was taken at this time.
4. Finance Report:

We had a couple of non-recurring transactions that occurred in January that impacted our results.

First, we created a Balanced Budget Fund by transferring $10,185 from the general fund. The Balanced Budget Fund was established to pay for staff salaries and benefits and Synod mission support that we didn't think would be covered by our projected giving budgeted for 2022. We felt that since we had a larger than usual unrestricted cash balance on hand, we could set aside this money in a fund to cover these expenses throughout the year.

This transfer appears as a decrease in Contributions on the Treasurer's report. However, this was partially offset by a $6,588 gift from the Badenhop Fund to assist with our youth program and Messiah staff health insurance. So, it's only the $3,597 difference that appears as a reduction in contributions in January. Each month in 2022 we will transfer $849 from the Balance Budget Fund back to contributions.

This explains about half of our $6,932 decrease in available cash. The remainder is due to a $3,722 shortfall in giving versus the budget for January. Expenses were nearly on budget.

Our available unrestricted cash totals $46,376, about one and a half times our budgeted monthly expenses.

Other Finance items: Last month, Partners in Celebration (synod quarterly program) – shows only 3 contribution dates. Finance was investigating as there should be four contribution dates.

Regarding Payroll, a proposal was made to use Paycor Payroll Tax Compliance Services. Jessica Carle currently does the congregation’s payroll. She keys the numbers into a software program, but does not have specific payroll expertise. The finance team notes that our church needs an expert advice partner to ensure that we have no errors and are providing correct tax returns and payroll tax payments. Jessica would still input the numbers, but Paycor would provide a dedicated payroll specialist to answer any questions. The cost is $1406 per year and the rate is good for two years. With a special promotion, the cost to Messiah would be $752 per year. This would not be a contract agreement; we could discontinue at any time. Motion made by Michele Wilson to utilize this service. Second Andrew Lauber. Motion carried.

1. Thank yous and a building use request were included in the packet.
2. The upcoming church constitution review was discussed; it was suggested that the review starts with policies. Constitution committee now consists of Mike Driskill and Steve Plonk.
3. We do plan an Octoberfest for 2022. Watch for details – no action was needed at this time.
4. Personnel committee: The current handbook was approved in 2020. At that time pets were allowed to be brought to the workplace. Personnel team recommends that the congregation changes this policy and bans pets in the workplace. Motion was made by Michele Wilson and seconded by Andrew Lauber; motion carried. Pets in the worship service will be discussed in the March meeting.
5. Property report addition: A continuing item, parking lot lights, was taken care of this week. Issues have been identified with the gas in the kitchen and stovetop pilot lights. One is weak, will not light the eye easily. Service also is needed for stovetop pilots, not burning efficiently (yellow flame) as well.
6. Stewardship shout out: This team will need more members with Andrew & Rachel Lauber leaving the area. Upcoming Living Our Faith Workshops will take place on the last day of April/First of May.
7. The council thanked Andrew and Rachel for their service as they prepare to leave the area and move to North Carolina.
8. Tom Cole provided information about class action lawsuit notices in packet: Broiler Chickens: From 2008 to Nov. 30 2011 someone from our congregation purchased $254.96 of “breast products” – banquet meals probably. We can file a claim or not; in view of the amount and that so many other people are involved, we speculate that there would be a minimal amount of money returned to us. There also was the potential to participate in a class action settlement about Zoom. A motion was made against filing for either class action settlement by Rachel Rushworth-Hollander, seconded by Cristall Mount. Motion carried.
9. The Director of Music Search Committee plans weekly meetings.
10. Seminarian report was attached to the council packet. In addition to financial assistance, seminarians need emotional/spiritual support as well. A correction was noted to the name on page 19; this is a duplicate of Bruce Hayes classes. Since Bruce has a scholarship and does not need funds, it was suggested we provide the support he would have received to the seminary to allow continued services. If we choose to fund Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN, funds could be allocated to support of their scholarship fund.  Michele Wilson made a motion to provide these funds to the seminary; Pastor Susan Thisell seconded. Motion carried.
11. Michele Wilson provided an update on the video license renewal from Christian Video Licensing International. A year ago the congregation purchased a license to show a movie to members and have discussion afterward. Renewal would cost $250 for one year license, which covers only movies/shows in their vault, not an all encompassing license. Since we do not charge a fee and have audience of less than 50 people, we do not fall under any piracy laws. Recommend not to renew at this time. If we have another film to show, we can renew at that time.
12. Leadership teams list was discussed. No action was taken at this time.
13. A motion to adjourn was made by Cristall Mount and seconded by Rachel Rushworth-Hollander. The meeting was adjourned at 2 p.m. with the Lord’s Prayer.