

**Grace Lutheran Church  
Congregational Council Meeting Minutes  
March 15, 2020**

**Members Present:** John Grogan, Walker Stockley, Craig Ketner, Brian Beer, Bob Corbett, Larry Winsch, Pastor Gregg Hoffman, Karen Warmoth, Patti Saunders, Pastor Rachel Hoffman, Dawn Hartman, Floyd Ritchie, Adele Evans

**Members Absent:** Chris Cassidy

**CALL TO ORDER** – John Grogan called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA** – Agenda was amended to change “Outreach” to “Property” under Committee/Officer Reports under Discussion and to note that Dr. Rick Richter sent a letter which was handed out to be considered as part of the New Business conversation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Floyd Ritchie motioned to approve agenda as amended. Walker Stockley seconded. Motion carried.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Karen Warmoth motioned to approve the February Council minutes. Dawn Hartman seconded. Motion carried.

**DEVOTION** – Patti Saunders provided a devotion which centered on the uncertainty we feel in difficult situations such as the current pandemic and the faith we can hold to in the midst of it.

**MISSIONAL MINUTES** - Each Council member was invited to share a brief comment on how God has been seen working at Grace. Topics included the great response to the Youth’s need for plastic bags (and the opportunity for trash to become something positive), growing participation in the Hunger Outreach team, behind the scenes work being done around church by many members, the joy of a surplus, the positive response to Time & Talent thus far (including the excitement our Young Youth had in signing up to be part of new things), the quick response to the changing pandemic situation by the pastors, a meaningful online worship service that reached past and present members and many others, and making sure family members are in a safe place at this time.

**STUDY**

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Pr. Gregg explained the new format of our Council meetings going forward, which will be structured around a “Consent Agenda”. In this format, we will divide the meeting into “Discussion” and “No Discussion” items, which allows us to focus our time and effort on the most pressing needs of the congregation and not micromanage the work of Committees, who are faithfully doing their work in their meetings. At the beginning of a Council meeting, any item in the “No Discussion” section can be moved to the “Discussion” section at the request of a Council member who believes discussion is needed. Votes may be taken on “No Discussion” items – this would occur, for example, if Council had already discussed something at a previous meeting and wanted extra time for verification of an item, or if a Committee needed official approval from Council for an action but that Council did not need to discuss, as they had already done the faithful work of determining the correct course of action.

## DISCUSSION

### OLD BUSINESS

- a. Discussion and vote regarding the 2019 surplus general funds (discussed in February meeting)
  - a. Pr. Gregg attended the Finance Committee meeting last Sunday, and in the course of their discussion, he found that it is likely that some information from both Finance and Council didn't get adequately shared between groups, causing some confusion and frustration. He took time to share with Council what he heard Finance saying in regards to the designation of the surplus funds from 2019.
    - i. They were concerned that Council was not reviewing their recommendations and that their recommendations were not being valued. Pr. Gregg assured them that a significant portion of February's Council meeting was dedicated to reviewing and discussing their recommendations, and that we do take them seriously, even if we do not ultimately agree. They were glad to hear it.
    - ii. They do support the idea of giving to the Synod out of the surplus.
    - iii. They do not have an objection to the idea of using some of the surplus for outreach purposes but wish for a more transparent and deliberate way to do it. For example, Council could set up a designated fund and promote a charitable organization for the congregation to give towards. They are concerned that simply giving a check to a new-to-Grace organization is not a true partnership.
    - iv. They believe we may be undervaluing the outreach that is done in our building. They support the refurbishment projects we have already planned and would be in support of growing those efforts in other areas of the building where other groups meet, so that we could expand our ability to be good hosts. This would be, in their opinion, a faithful support of the outreach already happening here.
    - v. They would like to see any check written be done in connection with action. For example, using funds to support other initiatives at Grace that would support the community, like adopting a highway or sponsoring a workday. In this vein, Pr. Gregg wondered if Grace has ever taken part in God's Work, Our Hands Sunday, where each ELCA congregation is encouraged to adopt a project (or several) that benefits the community. Funds could be used to support a project for this day.
    - vi. Pr. Gregg did find the policy that says the Finance Committee shall make a recommendation to the Council in January regarding the previous year's surplus. Finance did so, and Council voted on that recommendation, and so the policy has been followed.
  - b. Council continued discussion on how the surplus may best be spent, including considering the information Pr. Gregg shared from Finance. Continued discernment included:
    - i. Should we consider paying off the mortgage by 2023? This process can be discussed with our SAS consultant beginning in May.
    - ii. We reached over 500 people on Sunday morning through our online service. Perhaps now is the right time to expand that in-house outreach and invest in worship streaming equipment.
    - iii. There are other opportunities to connect to the community in vital needs areas, like food and housing (ministries that are already part of Grace's mission).
    - iv. The toilets that we discussed replacing have been priced and are ready to be purchased and installed. Toilets (of regulation and slightly higher heights), seats, and installation should cost about \$2,000.

- v. Council would like a feasibility consult done to see if a bathroom could be installed on the Fellowship Hall level. Property is asked to get a quote on having that consult done.
- c. In light of this new discussion, and wanting more information about the cost of streaming equipment, Dawn Hartman motioned that Council approve \$2,000 of the surplus to be spent on replacing the toilets identified by Property and that the designation of the remainder of the surplus be determined at our next Council meeting, once more information is available. Pr. Gregg seconded. Motion carried.

## NEW BUSINESS

- a. Conversation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic
  - a. Council discussed the absence of a current disaster response policy and noted that the Safety Committee is in the process of developing several safety response plans. This weekend, Pr. Gregg and John Grogan acted in accordance with the inclement weather policy and decided together to cancel in-person worship for March 15<sup>th</sup>. Council agreed that this was the correct way to take action in the given situation.
  - b. Council discussed the current recommendations by the government organizations, information received from medical professionals including Dr. Rick Richter, and the high risk of many of our members. Even with numerous precautions enacted, it is unlikely that we can make in-person worship safe currently (even being able to distribute Communion without risk of person-to-person contact is unlikely). Many of our outside groups are composed of high-risk demographics. Our younger groups (like Cub Scouts and Scouts) are comprised of a demographic that is at risk of being asymptomatic carriers of the virus. Because of the number of groups that meet in our building, and the significant amount of contact with people and surfaces that is had, it is unlikely that we can appropriately clean and sanitize the building in a way that would ensure everyone's safety at this time. Council noted that several of our partner organizations may need special consideration, such as Family Promise and Hunger Outreach, and we will be in touch with those organizations to see what they are doing and how we can support them safely.
  - c. The pastors and staff currently intend to continue working. The church office layout offers the opportunity for social distancing, which they will practice, and some or all work may be done remotely if necessary. Their work will likely include some new/different tasks as they explore ways to be church at a distance.
  - d. Our Lenten Wednesday events can be done online in a modified way. Grace has the licensing to broadcast Holden Evening Prayer, and Pr. Gregg will be in touch with our guest speakers to see if they would be able to present virtually. We can also re-arrange the order of the presentations to allow for more time for the speakers to do so/ to develop an alternative presentation.
  - e. Council noted that in this time apart, it will be important that we as a congregation be making phone calls to one another, especially those who do not have access to the internet and our virtual options. In this time, it will be important for us to care for one another in new ways.
  - f. Bob Corbett made a **motion that Grace suspend all in-person activities at least through April 1, 2020, with the exception of Alcoholics Anonymous (which, as a life-saving organization, can meet at the discretion of their group) and any other necessary exceptions determined by the pastors. Council will continue to monitor the situation and will make further decisions about when to resume in-person activities over the next few weeks.** Dawn Hartman seconded. Motion carried.

- g. Because Council determined it was not safe to hold in-person activities at Grace currently, the precautions for in-person events were not discussed at length. When in-person gatherings are deemed safe again, we will discuss what measures are appropriate at that time, including personal contact recommendations, Communion practices, and offering plate practices.
- b. Copier Contracts
  - a. Pr. Gregg shared that our current copier and customer service are significantly lacking. He has met with several other companies and would like to enter into a new lease with a new company. They will buy out our current contract, remove our current copier, and provide a new machine. They have very good references. This new lease would be at the same price we are currently paying. As this is an administrative decision, Council did not need to vote to approve it, but was supportive of this decision.
- c. Synod Assembly: Sig Huitt
  - a. Sig Huitt has volunteered to serve as one of Grace's Synod Assembly voting delegates for 2020. Others are still able to volunteer, as we have two more voting delegate seats allotted to us. Registration must be completed by May 4, 2020.
  - b. Adele Evans moved that Sig Huitt serve as one of Grace's Synod Assembly voting delegates for 2020. Walker Stockley seconded. Motion carried.
- d. Opportunity for a "pulpit swap" with Pr. Jeff Bryan from OAPC on May 17.
  - a. Pr. Gregg and Pr. Jeff have been discussing the opportunity for a pulpit swap. Council supports this idea. Pr. Gregg will continue planning with Pr. Jeff.
- e. Doodle Poll – Council Retreat
  - a. 10 members of Council have responded to the Doodle Poll regarding our spring Council Retreat. Members were encouraged to reply ASAP if they had not yet done so. Anyone with trouble accessing the poll can email Pr. Gregg directly.

## STAFF REPORTS

- a. Parish Report (pg. 9) – It was noted that some of the current worship assistant lists seem to be in conflict with each other. The pastors will look into it.
- b. Senior Pastor Report (pg. 10)
  - a. Pr. Gregg reported that the Nursery Committee had met earlier in the week to discuss, in particular, the staffing issue. The intent was to close the nursery during the COVID-19 situation (which is now unnecessary as the whole building is closed), and the nursery stay closed until either someone is hired to staff the nursery or a new volunteer system is instituted.
  - b. Pr. Gregg enjoyed participating in Seniors@Grace in February as the 'entertainment' portion of the event.
- c. Pastor Report (pg. 13) – Ski Retreat went well and allowed for a test of our current Medical Release & Waivers. Those will be updated to include more information that may be needed in a medical situation.
- d. Director of Music Report (pg. 16) – Received.

## COMMITTEE/OFFICER REPORTS

- a. Property (oral report from Floyd)
  - a. There are 6 heavy wooden tables in the White House basement in bad shape. Property intends to get rid of them.
  - b. Toilet replacement was discussed in surplus vote
  - c. The A/C heat pump unit in the Sanctuary balcony is broken and need to be replaced. It is likely 16+ years old. The replacement will cost approximately \$5,000 and Property has received two

bids. Property is allowed to use up to \$5,000 of the Property Contingency Fund without Council approval. In case the cost is higher than \$5,000, the following action was taken: Brian Beer motioned that the Property Committee purchase and install a new A/C unit for the balcony of the Sanctuary, using the Property Contingency Fund to pay for it. Karen Warmoth seconded. Motion carried.

- d. There is a copier in room 106 that does not seem to belong to anyone. Property would like to remove it. Pr. Gregg will inquire if DEX Imaging can dispose of it for us.
  - e. Property Cleanup Day is scheduled for April 4. Property will plan for this day, understanding that it may be postponed pending Council's decision on when to reinstate in-person activities at Grace.
- b. WELCM Advisory Board (pg. 17) – Pr. Rachel reported that the WELCM Advisory Board is actively exploring options regarding incorporation and/or becoming a 501(c)3, recognizing that long-term employment of the Campus Minister by Grace is not an option. They are also creating a 'media spokesperson policy' which will be approved at the next meeting and sent to both sponsoring congregations.

#### *NO DISCUSSION*

#### *OLD BUSINESS*

- a. *Bylaw revisions to establish additional Standing Committees – on hold until policies can be established*
- b. *Need to implement previously approved actions from Council in 2019*
- c. *Reviewing the scope of Council's task for the year – Council Yearly Goals Document (pg 18)*
- d. *Lenten Meals signup sheet – please continue to monitor your committee's involvement and thank you for your help in making these events a success!*
- e. *Don't forget to mark your calendars for the Ministry Celebration Event – March 29<sup>th</sup> [In accordance with the Council vote on in-person activities, this will be postponed or cancelled]*
- f. *Review the roll of members – this item cannot be completed at this time. Our membership database has not been used for attendance consistently until recently, which does not allow for a full measure of 'inactive' members. We plan to send a letter to members who no longer qualify for voting privileges, notifying them of this fact.*

#### *COMMITTEE/OFFICER REPORTS (reports received and included in the Council packet)*

*Worship & Music, Health & Wellness, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Finance, Place of Grace, Outreach, Bereavement, Rachel's Ring, Public Relations*

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**SHARING EXCITEMENT:** Each Council member was invited to share what part of Grace's ministry is exciting to them in the time between this Council meeting and the next.

Excitements shared included: figuring out new ways to do ministry from a distance in this time, connecting virtually to our Young Youth and Youth Groups, finding new ways to connect to one another (expanding our connection through phone calls), exploring new streaming options for now and the future, connecting to an extraordinary number of people through our digital platforms, taking this time to reach out to our church members and neighbors to show care.

#### **ACTION ITEMS REVIEW**

Devotions for next month: did not have the list on hand, John will notify

**ADJOURNMENT**

Larry Wunsch motioned to adjourn the meeting. Bob Corbett seconded. Motion carried, meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.