



FARMINGTON LUTHERAN CHURCH CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING



December 8, 2009

Present: Senior Interim Pastor Phil Walen; Council Members Scott Neurauter (President), Chris Birch, Vicky Cole, Rick Fencel, Tim Grundler, Sara Otterness (Vice President), Diane Randall, Phyllis Bles, Alison Wenck and Kent Porter. Absent: Treasurer Sandy Christensen, Council Member Gary Johnson.

CALL TO ORDER

The Council gathered at 6 p.m. at the Wenck home. Pastor Phil provided a Bible study, which was followed by a potluck meal. President Neurauter called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Neurauter asked for additions or changes to the agenda. Cole made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Bles. Motion carried.

COMMUNION SIGNUP

The communion sign up sheet was circulated, seeking volunteers for the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services and the month of January.

CALENDAR REVIEW

The calendar was circulated for review. Randall asked if the Jammin' for Jesus group plays for occasional Saturday evening worship services. Pastor Phil said the group plays about every six weeks. Birch asked if Council members would be asked to attend the new member class scheduled for January 21st. Pastor Phil said it would be helpful for new members to see the faces of those in leadership roles.

APPROVAL OF REPORTS

Interim Senior Pastor

Pastor Phil distributed a written report. He said the top half of the report showed the duties, adding, "It's very active around FLC. There's always a lot to do and I want to keep it in front of you." The bottom half of the report listed items of interest/and upcoming events. He pointed out the Children's Christmas program that would be included in each weekend worship service. He asked for the Council's opinion on the bulletin format that is receiving a trial run. The new format was partly in response to requests for printed music to enhance singing. Staff would continue to evaluate the bulletin format and the packaging of announcements for ease of handling. The first round of interviews had been conducted for Director of Music Ministries and Organist. He encouraged the Council to attend the upcoming St. Paul Area Synod-sponsored Toolkit for Congregational Leaders, using it as the annual Council Retreat.

He also mentioned the copier situation, stating that the current copier was not built to handle the quantity that FLC requires and overage costs had been occurring. Metro Sales had offered to replace the copier with a rebuilt one that could accommodate a larger volume. The rebuilt copier also would have scanning capability. The current copier cost was \$480.44 per month with the cost for the rebuilt copier totaling \$457.96 under a four-year lease. Metro Sales would also remove the defunct Rizograph at no cost, eliminating the need to pay \$600 for removal and creating more space in the workroom. Administrative Assistant Sue Swenson had reported that in the past Metro Sales has been responsive to calls for service. Neurauter said that obtaining a higher capacity copier probably would mean less outsourcing and result in cost savings. Fencel made a motion to renew the lease for a larger volume unit, seconded by Grundler.

Motion carried. Pastor Phil said he was hopeful that the new machine would arrive in time to run the FLC Annual Report booklets.

Treasurer's Report

Christensen was unable to attend. Pastor Phil said he had been tracking income and it appeared to be quite consistent for the past two months. He said Christensen would e-mail the report later.

The report, e-mailed to the Council December 14th, said the cash balance on November 30th was \$108,819.17, compared to \$86,632.95 at the end of October and \$91,788.41 at the start of the year. The report showed an increase in cash of \$24,186.22 during November and an overall increase in cash of \$17,030.76 for the year. Increases resulted mainly from increased giving and the end of financial obligations to the previous pastor. Components of the cash balances included \$37,924.75 in the General Fund offset by a negative \$24,861.168 for the Building Fund. The remaining cash balance of \$48,044.46 was in dedicated funds.

The Statement of Activities showed that revenues in November totaled \$71,672.96 versus expenses of \$53,269.12 for a net increase of \$18,403.84. The report noted that General Fund offerings totaled \$46,332.94. Also, \$17,245.11 was contributed to the Building Fund. The Treasurer's Report stated that without special appeals or gifts, FLC's average monthly giving for the Building Fund remains steady at about \$12,000. Year-to-date activities showed a positive balance of \$37,329.49 that is hopefully sustainable, keeping in mind that the surplus was in the General Fund and FLC was still behind in the building Fund. Christensen said in her report that it appeared FLC had gotten over the cash flow hump anticipated in August and September, due in large part to several generous gifts. She was projecting that FLC would come out ahead for the year by about \$30,000.

MINISTRY TEAM REPORTS

Reports had been e-mailed by several teams and others provided verbal information.

Adult Spiritual Growth – The group had learned that the Financial Peace University classes were going well. Another Prayers Around the Cross event would be scheduled for mid-January, with Grundler as the leader.

Children's Education – Wenck said the team had not met the previous month. As approved at the previous Council meeting, chairs for preschoolers had been ordered.

Fellowship & Service – Cole said the response to FLC's November craft sale had been "incredible." A total of \$5,800 was raised. Funds would be used to replace some kitchen items and \$2,000 would go to the Building Fund. The remainder of the monies would be distributed as needs arise and also help fund the Fellowship and Service ministry. Seven people had rented tables to sell their products; six of the seven had been pleased with the result.

Global Missions – At the group's meeting, Otterness had provided a brief summary of the mission trip and meetings with the Idete, Tanzania, partnership committee. The team approved involvement in the Fair Share program with Bega Kwa Bega to cover annual administrative bookkeeping expenses. The recommended \$500 per year will come from the Munch for Missions account. Lutangilo Secondary School sponsorship promotion was continuing. Garland Hall had hired a security guard and installed a security system. The orphanage planned to start a tutoring program for students who were falling behind academically. The report said that Global Missions would promote Mission Jamaica in 2010. An

emergency needs clothing fund was being established for Farmington Schools, with the purchase of twenty \$25 gift cards for the Unique store in Burnsville available through Community Action Council. Oterness would look for a speaker for Mission Sunday, set for January 31st. The collection of Christmas boxes for the Marie Sandvik Center was continuing.

Property – Birch said the flagpole had been repaired and several people had signed up to help clear sidewalks at FLC. He had met with those volunteers and reviewed their duties.

Oterness mentioned that the sanctuary had been extremely hot the previous Sunday and the ushers had not known how to correct the situation. Pastor Phil said that the increased temperature was primarily due to the sunny day. Randall said the Worship Coordinator program was to begin the next Sunday. The two people on duty each Sunday would know how to handle thermostats, fans, lighting and other things and would work with the ushers.

Stewardship – Porter said the team had met the previous evening. Approximately \$2,500 had been given to date through the Gifts that Give program. Reminder letters would be mailed to FLC members who had not responded to the request to complete their planned giving cards. He said approximately 25% of members had returned their cards, with 43% of the General Fund and 59% of the Building Fund pledged so far. Thank you letters would be sent early in January to those who had returned their cards.

Porter said the committee had “brainstormed” ideas and decided to explore the possibility of using an appeal to pay off the special assessments to avoid eight years of interest payments. He added that under New Business he would make a motion to hire an interim associate pastor.

Youth Ministry — Fencl said the team had met the previous evening. His e-mailed report outlined discussion topics. Only two people had attended the Thanksgiving Community Meal with the extra food taken to the Dorothy Day House for the Homeless in St. Paul. The event likely will be repeated next year with some changes. About 250 people had attended the Holy C.O.W. worship service. A confirmation retreat was scheduled for December 11th and 12th, with youth volunteering at the Union Gospel Mission on the 12th. A total of 25 youth had signed up to date for the July Mission Trip. Another lefse bake and sale was planned. A ski lock-in at Welch Village was scheduled for February 5th. The team had discussed the 2010 budget requests for youth.

Upcoming events included a lock-in and a winter retreat at Bay Lake for 9th through 12th graders and a possible tubing event for middle school-aged youth. For 2010-11, the confirmation program will be changed to include sixth through eighth graders instead of seventh through ninth graders. The final class of ninth graders will be confirmed in May 2010. A six-week Summer Stretch program for confirmation-aged students will be offered on Wednesdays in summer 2010. The program will include Bible study in the mornings and a service project in the afternoons.

Worship & Music – Randall said the team had met via telephone conference. Turnout had not been good at the past few meetings, partly due to availability of members. The team had discussed the screen and projector possibilities to enable the pastor and choir to see what the congregation sees on the screen. Also discussed was with purchasing 30 to 35 ELCA hymnals for the choir. The team thought that hymnals could be paid for by memorial gifts. Randall asked Porter about the possibility of obtaining a large screen from the armory where he is employed. Porter said that if another armory wanted the screen that’s where it would go.

Pastor Phil said he wanted FLC “to shift away from special fund raising and start to let people think we do have some room to use our regular giving for those things that we need.”

Porter moved that 30 hymnals be purchased for the choir at a cost not to exceed \$700, seconded by Birch. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF REPORTS

Secretary’s Report – Porter made a motion to approve the November Council meeting minutes, seconded by Birch. Motion carried.

Treasurer’s Report – No action was taken.

Ministry Team Reports – Birch made a motion to approve the reports, seconded by Randall. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Budget – The budget was not reviewed due to the absence of the Treasurer.

Year-end Reports -- Neurauter reminded Council Members that their year-end reports must be submitted to the office by December 23rd in order to be included in the printed Annual Report or the congregation.

Nominating Committee – Randall said that so far one candidate had accepted nomination for a Council position. Letters were sent to prospective candidates followed by a phone call. She said the committee also had discussed pre-selecting members for the Nominating Committee. Potential members also could be nominated from the floor at the Annual Meeting.

NEW BUSINESS -- Porter moved that FLC hire a half-time Interim Associate Pastor. Wenck made the second. Neurauter then asked for discussion. Porter said the Stewardship Committee was concerned about the workload for a single pastor. He pointed out ways in which the budget could be adjusted to pay for a 20-hour per week pastor. He said the line item related to the Building Fund revenue was listed as \$156,000 although \$225,000 would be more realistic and thus increase total revenue to a gain of \$34,000. Approximately \$3,000 per month would be needed for an Interim Associate Pastor. Porter also brought up hiring for the Music Director position and the need for additional custodial hours. Priorities should be established, he said.

Otterness said that a previous decision stated that an associate pastor would not be hired until FLC reached a certain dollar amount of giving per month. The Council asked if part-time pastors were available. Pastor Phil said yes. He added that hiring an Interim Associate Pastor would be a step toward receiving pastoral care and also allow budgeting toward the goal of having a full-time Associate Pastor.

The Council discussed whether or not money should be allocated in the budget for hiring a part-time Interim Associate Pastor. It was suggested that the motion be amended to provide funding in the budget for that position so the matter could be taken to the congregation for consideration.

Otterness said she wanted to go on record as saying, “This is premature. Three months ago we were talking about shutting down, Do we want one (an Interim Associate Pastor)? Certainly. Can we convey that to the congregation? Certainly. Does it have to be conveyed in the budget? No.”

Randall said, “We have to have some faith. That’s how we’ve gotten where we are.” Wenck said the congregation’s history shows “they always give what we need. I have to agree that if we put the money in the budget, we can say ‘yes, if the giving goes the way we project it to go, the way we assume by the commitment cards, yes, we will have the money to hire an Interim Associate Pastor.’ ”

Otterness asked, "Is this a wish list or truly a budget?" Grundler said the Council had to be realistic and have credibility with the congregation

Pastor Phil said if the funding were placed in the budget, the Council could explain to the congregation that the Council would track giving for a few months and see if an Interim Associate Pastor would be affordable. The Council also could bring in a zero budget with very little allocated to additional staff.

After more discussion about budgeting, Porter called the question on his original motion to hire a half-time Interim Associate Pastor. All present voted no. Motion failed.

Neurauter asked if everyone agreed on adjusting the Building Fund’s projected income to \$225,000. Council members concurred. Also, he asked if they agreed in principle that hiring some sort of associate part-time pastor would be a good idea. He added, “Do we want to say we would like to have the money available to hire an Interim Associate Pastor? Do we want to put that in the budget and say it to the congregation?” Pastor Phil said he thought it would be very healthy to do so.

Neurauter stated, “Last year we presented a budget that was huge. Other things played into that. I’m cautious about presenting a budget that says this is what we want but our revenues don’t match that.”

Pastor Phil said that the Council could approve the proposed budget including the \$34,000 needed for an interim associate pastor and then revisit the topic at its January meeting. If the end of the year figures did not support the position, that could be explained at the annual meeting.

Fencl said, “Everyone knows that giving was down due to circumstances.” Otterness said, “We don’t know how many people are gone; how many we have lost. We haven’t cleaned the roster for past several years,” Pastor Phil said that the best judge would be to look at worship numbers, not membership, and also to look at givers.

Randall asked about planning for vision as a Council and as a congregation. “Your vision most of the time is going to take more dollars,” she said. “So how do you plan for that? Do you say you have to give first?”

Pastor Phil said the really important thing to remember is that the congregation is fairly fragile right now regarding money. He said, “It’s good to give them an honest budget. I agree, Diane, that you have to keep pushing the edge. You can say we can give you a zero balanced budget. We also have \$24,000 for an associate pastor. We’re working toward that but couldn’t be any more than that now.” He added, “This debate you’ve had is great.”

Fencl said, “Our congregation is hopeful right now. You put it in there; they give what they need to give to get to that point. Put it in there and say, ‘This is where we are and what we want.’”

Pastor Phil asked about the Council passing the more aggressive budget that would list Building Fund revenues at \$225000. "In January," he said, "if we see that the Building Fund did not meet expectations, we can go to the congregation and say giving didn't meet expectations and we have to pare back."

Neurauter said he thought the Council needed a majority to decide the matter. As put forth by Porter, he said, "we're going to adjust the income on the Building Fund to \$225,134, leaving an overall balance of \$24,000. We can put that into the Associate Pastor's slot and show a balanced budget of zero." Otterness thought the figure could be listed as a positive balance but not an expense with the narrative providing an explanation. Randall said the Council would be sending a message to the congregation that more money is needed.

Pastor Phil said it could be explained that an associate pastor would cost about \$3,000 a month. That figure could be placed in the budget with the explanation that this amount would allow FLC to bring on an associate pastor in April.

Neurauter polled the Council. Seven favored placing the amount in the budget and two were opposed. He said the budget would include a line item for a Planned Associate Pastor. If need be, he said, that will be changed before the budget goes to the Annual Meeting. Porter made a motion to include in the budget the line item for a halftime Interim Associate Pastor, seconded by Bles. Motion carried.

Porter announced that he would be missing the next two monthly Council meetings. He will be working in Washington State although he would be able to dial in for meetings.

ADJOURNMENT & LORD'S PRAYER

Porter made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:48 p.m., seconded by Cole. Motion carried.

The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Lea Guenther,
Recording Secretary

Meeting Reminders:

Executive Board: Tuesday, January 5, 2010, at 7 p.m.
Council: Tuesday, January 12, 2010, at 7 p.m.