



FARMINGTON EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES



January 13, 2009

Present: Senior Pastor Jeff Dorman; Council Members Jana Monroe (President), Scott Neurauter (Vice President), Craig Beissel, Vicky Cole, Tim Grundler, Julie Houck, Gary Johnson, Sara Otterness, Matt Piller, Diane Randall and Alison Wenck; Treasurer Sandy Christensen. Visitors: Susan Miller, Assistant to the Bishop, St. Paul Area Synod; and Stewardship Team members Bob Brownawell, Mark Pearson and Brent Drefke.

President Monroe called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

DEVOTIONS

Pastor Jeff led devotions based on the Hebrew names of God, concluding with prayer.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Cole made a motion to adopt the agenda, seconded by Neurauter. Motion carried.

GUEST SPEAKER

Susan Miller, Assistant to the Bishop, St. Paul Area Synod, provided a follow-up to a retreat topic, discussed financial issues and presented options for calling an Associate Pastor. One of her major concerns during tough economic time, she said, is that churches tend to make decisions about staffing that make for tougher economic times. If staff is increased without adequate funding, one type of problem results. Cutting staff and services results in another problem--income will decrease because needs are not being met.

Currently, Farmington Lutheran Church has four full-time and one three-quarter time staff members, excluding support staff. Miller said that for every 100 people attending worship, a congregation should have one pastoral or staff person. If 600 people were attending worship, six staff members would be needed. Over 600, seven staff members would be needed. She said, however, that congregations must be prudent about fiscal responsibility. Most congregations see money as the bottom line, but the bottom line is really God's kingdom.

She said, "We have to ask what do we need to do in order to further God's mission in this place. If we're really furthering the mission of God, the money will follow. If not, are we really furthering God's mission or ours, and we need to ask what is the gift in the financial shortfall? What is God saying to us? Those are the questions leadership has to struggle with at this time." She also cautioned both against creating positions that cannot be paid for and under serving people, resulting in members leaving for another congregation. Piller said he did not think the congregation is aware of the downward trend in FLC's finances.

Miller said prudent staffing might mean that FLC would say that a three-quarters time pastor is what can be afforded at present, with the goal of revisiting the financial picture and working toward a full-time position. She said leaders should talk honestly with the congregation in terms of what is needed to go forward and make a plan for doing so. She mentioned that a church with which she is working is making 10% cuts "across the board." Any church facing financial difficulty should tell its members

that the congregation has run out of cushion and giving must increase to fund necessary programs. A capital campaign and/or an aggressive stewardship campaign could be considered.

If the FLC Council were to make the decision to call a three-quarter-time pastor rather than full-time, Miller said, an applicant pool is available. Most candidates would be younger people who are looking for a lighter workload for personal and professional reasons, with some older people available. She said more people are seeking pastoral positions in this area than there are positions available. President Monroe thanked Miller for visiting and providing insight.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Annual Meeting -- Monroe announced that the annual congregational meeting is scheduled for 11:45 a.m. on January 25. Council members will be needed to sign in those attending to make sure a quorum is present. Ten percent of voting members is needed for a quorum. Anyone who has been confirmed is a voting member. She said child care would be available and a movie would be shown to older children in the Education wing.

Council Retreat -- The annual Council retreat for new and returning members is scheduled from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, February 7, Monroe said. Contrary to what has taken place in the past, the February Council meeting will not take place at the retreat. It is scheduled for 7 p.m. on February 10.

Council Appointments -- Appointments scheduled to take place at the February Council meeting will be one-year Council representatives to the Cemetery Board and the Endowment Committee.

Monroe mentioned that an error in the January newsletter incorrectly listed the terms for Council candidates Otterness and Chris Birch. The terms will actually be three years long.

COMMUNION SIGNUP

Monroe distributed a signup sheet for communion assistants for January through March.

APPROVAL

Secretary's Report -- The minutes for the December 9th regular Council meeting and the December 18th Special meeting were approved on a motion by Otterness, seconded by Neurauter. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Beissel introduced the members of the Stewardship Committee who were in attendance. Treasurer Christensen provided an overview of FLC's financial picture for the past several years. Her presentation included monthly income and expense trends, cumulative monthly results and estimated General Fund and Building Fund balances. She pointed out that some of FLC's current shortfall could be attributed to the assessment payment that occurs each May and November. The goal of the 2008 Moving Forward campaign was to cover the assessment payments and the shortfall in the Building Fund. Those needs were not completely met by the campaign.

She illustrated the monthly giving records, pointing out that a letter is sent out late each year to remind members to fulfill their pledges. A tremendous response was received at the end of 2007, resulting in a cushion for starting the year 2008. Even with that cushion, FLC concluded 2008 with a significant negative balance. Christensen also showed how the financial picture would look at the end of 2009 if nothing changed. Giving to the Building Fund especially has lagged, with \$14,000 received each

month to pay the \$16,000 per month mortgage. With no changes in giving, she said, no cash would be left in the General Fund or the Building Fund after making the May assessment payment.

Beissel said he had had discussions with a financial firm regarding the mortgage that comes due in mid-2009. The company has offered to modify the current mortgage without charging any fees. Also discussed was rolling the assessment payments into the second mortgage. He said he would continue to explore these possibilities.

Johnson made a motion to extend the meeting past 9 p.m., seconded by Otterness. Motion carried.

Christensen had provided a draft 2009 budget to the Council the previous month that included all budget requests and funding for a full-time Associate Pastor. After meeting with Pastor Jeff and the Executive team, she had made adjustments to develop what she termed a “realistic” budget based on 2008 actual revenue. Cuts were suggested in ministry team areas and the human resources area. A \$40,000 savings in staffing could be realized by not hiring a full-time Associate Pastor (\$20,000), eliminating some support staff (\$15,000), eliminating health insurance coverage for a staff member who was willing to obtain coverage through her husband’s insurance (\$4,000), and eliminating the continuing education and publications allowance for the Senior Pastor per Pastor Jeff’s offer (\$1,000). Among other suggested cuts were reducing the cost of mailings by relying on e-mail communications, reducing \$5,000 from utility costs and lowering insurance costs by selling the church van. She said a mortgage campaign would be needed to compensate for the decreased giving to the Building Fund.

Brownawell presented a spreadsheet that showed general giving, expense and membership trends for recent years. Congregational growth is a factor, he said, with the number of giving units remaining stagnant for the last two or three years. A 2.3% increase in giving, while slightly below the average in recent years, would be required to meet the proposed realistic budget.

Wenck said that if FLC could raise \$2,500 more each month to cover the mortgage payment, “we would be okay.” She agreed that additional funding would be needed to cover the assessment payments. She said that members should be informed about the extra amount of dollars needed each week. Randall added that members should be told they were not being asked to give a large amount but only a little.

Beissel made a motion to approve the treasurer’s report; seconded by Houck. Motion carried.

STAFF & MINISTRY TEAM REPORTS

Several ministry team reports were distributed via e-mail, including:

Adult Spiritual Growth – Topics of discussion were the Prayers Around the Cross night, which had received very positive comments; the Space for God study, for which 45 people had signed up; and continuing the Nooma study through January and February. The ministry team will explore using a movie titled “Fireproof” for a six-week small group study and offering financial classes with a Christian/spiritual basis. Pastor Michelle had scheduled a “Blessing of the Hands” for January 19 for those involved in the Stephens Ministry program.

Children’s Ministries – The team had discussed the Akaloo-based Sunday and Wednesday school programs along with the “giving tree” for supplies, all of which were working well. Also discussed were the KiC swimming party planned for January 23, Vacation Bible School and the successful Christmas cantata. A decision was made to cancel SportsLife Camp for 2009 because the proposed

date coincided with the Dakota County Fair. The topic will be revisited prior to 2010. Also discussed were the Epiphany Extravaganza scheduled for January 11 and possible game nights.

Global Missions – The team had met twice to discuss the benevolence fund for 2009 and finalizing benevolence percentages. Benevolence goals were determined, including local missions, \$13,500; Jamaica, \$12,000; and Tanzania, \$12,000. The St. Area Synod goal was to be discussed at the January 8 meeting. More than 50 Christmas boxes had been delivered to the Marie Sandvik Center, \$1,000 was donated to the Community Action Council for utility emergencies and \$1,000 was donated to an established account for FLC “Families in Crisis,” to be used at the discretion of Pastor Jeff. Plans were made for Mission Sunday January 11, including the kickoff of a Food Shelf Drive planned for the first Sunday of each month. The report said funding had been received to sponsor 13 students at the Idete secondary school during the 2009 school year.

Worship and Music – The team had discussed purchasing and implementing the new book of worship, usher procedures and responsibilities, and the proposed Worship and Music budget for 2009. The cantata had been well attended and feedback was positive. Additional ways to involve children in worship would be explored. The Prayers Around the Cross service had been successful; offering additional such services would be considered.

OLD BUSINESS –

Discussion and Final Approval of the Budget – Several Council members said they had not been aware and did not think the congregation was aware of the seriousness of FLC’s financial situation. They said more communication was needed. Pastor Jeff pointed out that figures are posted every Sunday morning in the bulletin and the congregation had been informed on the worship space screens that giving had to literally double in November and December to break even at the end of the year. One of the realities of being on the Council, he said, is that “you learn the nuts and bolts of the organization,”

Randall had prepared several overhead sheets that listed ideas expressed by the Council at an earlier meeting along with additional suggestions. She emphasized that FLC should celebrate its successes. Also mentioned were emphasizing the Simply Giving program, making more use of electronic communications, contacting those who have not met their Building Fund commitments, greeting and connecting with people so they will get involved, home visits, challenging ministry teams and approaching the budget shortfall with a paradigm shift.

The Council then looked at staffing. The consensus, although not unanimous, was to add funding to the proposed budget to allow for calling a full-time Associate Pastor at mid-year. Council members decided on a salary freeze for all staff. A saving also would result because a staff member had offered to obtain health insurance through a spouse’s company instead of FLC.

Pastor Jeff said, “The bottom line really is how much money do you want to say we want to raise in extra funds for the coming year.”

Council members agreed that they did not wish to look at cutting staff. Piller said, “We’re at a time when we need more religion in our lives. We already don’t have enough support for what we need.”

Johnson made a motion to approve a budget for 2009 putting back into the realistic 2009 proposed budget a figure of \$39,500, which included all the proposed staff cuts except for the health insurance figure, not including any benevolence funds that would be added later. The motion was seconded by

Houck. A friendly amendment was offered by Grundler with the wording modified to approve the realistic 2009 budget with the full-time salary for an Associate Pastor, no other staff cuts, minus the health insurance figure and including the salary freeze. The amendment was seconded by Wenck. Beissel commended Randall for all her work. He said he believed the Council should “prepare ourselves that the wheels could be falling off the cart on that specific day, come April or May.” The motion on the amendment carried. A vote was then taken on the original motion as amended. The motion carried, with Beissel voting “no.”

NEW BUSINESS —

Benevolence Motion — Otterness explained the reasoning for the division of Benevolence funds, much of which come from special fundraisers. She made a motion for conditional approval of the benevolence goals and designated recipient entities with the stipulation that Global Mission can be reassessed and adjusted over time at the discretion of the Global Mission ministry team with subsequent review by the Congregational Council. The motion was seconded by Grundler. Discussion followed. Motion carried.

Ministry Team Expense Approval Motion — Neurauter moved that all receipts for expenditures be approved and signed for by the respective team/committee Council member or proper staff person (for those that have a staff person only). Council members may not approve expenditures for items that are not belonging to their team/committee. All receipts not approved by this method will not be paid. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Following a suggestion by Randall, Council members decided to get together for an informal work session at 7 p.m. Tuesday, January 20, to prepare for the annual meeting.

ADJOURNMENT – Otterness made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Johnson. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 11:28 p.m., followed by the Lord’s Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Lea Guenther
Recording Secretary

MEETING REMINDERS:

Executive Board: Tuesday, February 3, 2009, 7 p.m.

Council Retreat: Saturday, February 7, 9 a.m. to noon

Next Council Meeting: February 10, 7 p.m.