

Minutes of Congregation Council Meeting
April 14, 2020
7:00 PM

- I. **Call to Order** at 7:02pm. Note that this meeting was a virtual meeting, with members of Council calling in via a Zoom arrangement, allowing for audio only or audio-visual participation.
- A. **Attendance:** M. Binkley, M. Blower, F. Casciano, R. Doty, Pr. R. Elliott, K. Ervin, S. Mathieu, C. McGrath, K. McNally, N. McNally, C. Pirrotta, Pr. T. Reichley, D. Rohrbach, Pr. S. Steele, M. Stanziola, R. Stevens
- B. **Excused Absences:** There were no absences.
- C. **Devotions:** Denise Rohrbach
- II. **Approval of Minutes**
March 31, 2020 Council Meeting - Motion: To approve March 31 council meeting minutes as presented - by Chris McGrath, second by Kristin Ervin. Motion **Approved**.
- III. **Staff Reports**
- Pr. Elliott observed that the staff was working well together. He noted the health risks to members in nursing homes and as first responders / health care and other essential workers in this time of the coronavirus pandemic. Staff and volunteers are continuing to interact by phone and video with members and encouraging prayers for those affected by virus response, either due to health risks or to loneliness and other effects of isolation.
- IV. **Mission Team Reports/Items for Council**
Mission Team reports were tabled until the next Council meeting.
- V. **Coronavirus Response**
- A. **Building Closure**
Bob Stevens noted that the facility continues to be closed for services, meetings and Nursery School until the end of April; no outside groups are using the facility through the end of April. Chris Carter and others are emphasizing that people are not to be accessing the facility at the same time, to avoid the potential for unnecessary face-to-face interaction.
- B. **Nursery School / Vacation Bible School**
Kristin Ervin reported that April tuition payments for Nursery School attendance were being refunded, carried over to fall 2020 pre-payment, or donated back to the school, depending on the choice of the parent. A means of showing teacher appreciation (for

Nursery School and Sunday School) is being investigated, as is a means of acknowledging children who are moving on to the next class in the fall.

Plans for the church seating at the IronPigs game scheduled for June 5 and for the intergenerational party planned for Pentecost are being reconsidered, given the substantial probability of facilities not being available on those dates due to coronavirus restrictions.

Regarding VBS, planning is being affected. Decisions will soon need to be made regarding if a VBS is to be held, when, and under what conditions.

C. Relief Checks

Bob Stevens spoke to the letter drafted to present opportunities for congregation members to contribute to the financial needs of other members and to the local church community. Several editorial changes to the draft letter were suggested, and Bob will finalize the letter and send it out to congregation members.

D. Finances / Capital Campaign / PPP

Finances - For the first two weeks in April, approximately \$18k in checks had been received at the church office. Contributions by the Simply Giving program have increased in March/April. The Stewardship team will be placing emphasis on the Simply Giving program as a means for members to routinely give their pledged donations.

Capital Campaign - Regarding the Capital Campaign, the next steps are approving arrangements and payments for fees for architects and necessary permits for construction. In terms of facility layout, the plans for organ/piano, choir, and altar will soon need to be specifically defined. Questions arising from the coronavirus situation include the following: (1) do we need to plan for a specific area for technology coordination, and have we considered enough the technology needs to continue virtual worship (and other virtual gatherings) in some form; and (2) will there be an increased need to accommodate multiple smaller services in the facility? The congregation may need to consider if an additional objective for facility planning is the likelihood of continuation of virtual worship services. Numbers of "Zoom" connections for Holy Week services were approximately as follows: Maundy Thursday – 75; Good Friday – 58 + 125; Easter – 48 + 225 (plus 90 on Facebook, with a total number of "looks" on Facebook in the range of 550). Each connection may be assumed to be about 1.5 people.

PPP – The application for a payroll protection loan was submitted through Embassy Bank. If granted, the loan would be for about \$136k, and monies could be available by the end of the month. As previously noted, with staff being retained, the loan would convert to a grant.

E. Project Help / CAT Camp

The question of having a Project Help trip to Maine this year is actively being considered. While the program has been successful for years, there is a real question about the wisdom of taking youth (and adults) out of state for a week, given the coronavirus situation. Plans to arrange a local service trip are being considered as an alternative to out-of-state travel.

Pr. Spencer observed that planning continues for the CAT Camp scheduled for August. There is some youth enthusiasm for the event to occur.

F. Virtual Worship

Pr. Ric and Council members discussed whether there should be regularly scheduled virtual services for children and/or a Word for God's Children portion within other virtual services. By sense of Council, holding regularly scheduled virtual services for children will be pursued if consistent with the ability of staff to create the services. Council agreed to allow Sharon MacCabe to access the LCHS nave a limited number of times to record hymns and preludes/postludes for use during virtual services. An idea is to use one access to record materials for multiple weeks of services. Fellowship time after the end of the virtual services has been lasting up to one hour and seems to meet a need for members to keep up with the events in others' lives. Faith Formation for Adults / Center for Faith and Life asked about the possibility of hosting spiritual / educational events during the week in a virtual format. They expressed a belief that additional faith-formation, educational, and/or prayer/fellowship opportunities may be welcome in a time when many people are isolated from one another and many community and congregational events have been cancelled. By sense of Council, CFL can proceed, ensuring that proper training of hosts and moderators for the virtual events is considered.

G. Drive-in Church / Communion

Further discussion on this topic was tabled until a later Council meeting.

VI. Next Steps

A. Next Meeting Date: Special Council meeting on April 28 at 7 PM. Another virtual meeting via Zoom or equivalent technology is planned. The primary topic is expected to be updating plans given the COVID-19 situation. Mission Team reports will be solicited, as they were tabled from the agenda for April 14th. Discussion of drive-in church and communion may also be scheduled for that meeting.

Council was also reminded that additional discussion regarding the retirement of Jane Elliott and the transition of her duties to other(s) is still needed.

B. To Do/Assignments: Devotions for April 28 – Chris Pirrotta

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned with prayer.

Time of adjournment: 8:18 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Doty, Council Secretary