



Luther Place Congregational Council Minutes
August 15, 2019
Luther Place, All Saints Room

Present: Tara Hogan, Kate Wulff, Pastor Karen Brau, Doug Walter, Jay Forth, Emma Northcott, Amanda Lindamood, Michael Wendt, Einar Olsen, Cathi Jones, Tom Randall

Apologies: Caroline Eayrs, Joan Hay, Elizabeth Ellis

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm by Tara.

Agenda

A motion was made by Mike to approve the agenda for the meeting. The motion was seconded by Jay and passed unanimously.

Minutes

The minutes were distributed electronically via our google group prior to the meeting.

A motion was made by Mike to accept the July 2019 Council Meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Kate and passed unanimously.

Congregational Meeting

The meeting is August 15. The Executive Committee met and determined to experiment with a new agenda sequence for meetings, that was introduced at this August meeting. The current agenda includes Committee and Liaison reports, the Devotion, the Pastor's Report, the President's Report, and a review of Council Commitments in a larger discussion format.

2019-2020 Teams and Liaisons—list reflects signups for the 2019-20 Year

The focus of reports has been clarified to spotlight key highlights, support requests, and concerns.

Finance - Kate + Tom (Chair)

This report was given in person by Kate. She states that Luther Place is only 2,000 dollars behind in giving, and there is a current budget surplus due to the status of the ongoing hiring processes. The biggest celebration point is that Luther Place has paid off the mortgage on the renovation of the parsonage. It was shared that there was recently an incident of fraudulent checks being issued in Luther Place's name, with no identified source known at this time. An investigation is being conducted by the bank that realized the fraud, and internal processes are being reexamined.

A written report was submitted to complement this highlighting.

A motion was made by Kate to approve the Finance Report for the meeting. The motion was seconded by Einar and passed unanimously.

Property – Cathi

This report was given in person by Cathi. She states that there is a leak on the fourth floor contributed to by an ongoing problem of feeding the pigeons. Doug raised a concern about a tree on N Street that is in need of examination and possible removal.

A written report was submitted to complement this highlighting.

Personnel – Doug

This report was given in person by Doug. He states that today is Xavier's last day, and that Monday, August 19th begins the start of a two-week office closure coinciding with Pastor Karen's annual time off. In the short term, Pastor Karen, Sarah and Justin have distributed key administrative roles, and short-term contracts and pay increases have been signed by Sarah and Justin as the hiring of a new administrator is considered. Kevin has completed his probationary period as the Sexton, and there are six applicants for the job posting for the Director of Spiritual Formation and Community Connection. When Pastor Karen returns from her time off, Cathleen will begin a trial employment period, increasing her responsibilities as a current office volunteer.

A written report was submitted to complement this highlighting.

Membership – this committee is being restructured, and that will resume focus in September and October. Amanda and Pastor Karen are in initial conversation.

Stewardship -Elizabeth

A report was not offered in Elizabeth's absence, but it was restated that a Stewardship letter is going out to the congregation and all Council members are expected to participate by pledging.

Engagement – this committee is being restructured, and that will resume focus in September and October. Amanda and Pastor Karen are in initial conversation.

Community Care – Joan

A report was not offered in Joan's absence.

New Connections/Listening – Michael

A written report was not sent, but Mike stated that there is a trickle of applicants coming in for the position of Director of Spiritual Formation and Community Connection. The hiring process will pick up post Labor Day.

Protest & Movement – Einar, Jay

A written report was submitted by Einar, and commented on by Jay and Einar jointly. It was stated that 15-20 people are serving as members now, and a new focused direction is being discerned. There is a request for an increased budget, and an intention to challenge members in their engagement, with a hope that Council will bless both of these requests.

Steinbruck Center Liaison—Emma

A written report was shared by Sarah, and an in-person report was made by Emma. She shared that an all-day retreat will be held for the Steinbruck Center in September.

Youth & Families Liaison – Caroline

No report was submitted in Caroline's absence, but Pastor Karen highlighted the Sunday School pilot. An announcement will be made during worship on Sunday, with Sunday School kicking off on September 8th. We're attending to the themes of public church and community care, integrated with worship components and intergenerational activities. Using a hybrid model, a team of teachers is leading a regular class for 0-5 and 6-11-year olds, as well as an introduced Caregiver Forum, and monthly all age one room Sunday school open to all kids, youth and adults. The first Sunday each month will incorporate an Intergenerational Activity.

Long Range Planning/Deficit Reduction Task Force Liaison—Amanda

No written report was submitted, as the Long-Range Planning meeting hasn't met since June. The scheduled August meeting was rescheduled for September 11th, 2019, with updates to be shared at the September Council meeting.

Highlighted areas reflect unconfirmed committee assignments and directions.

Devotion/Spiritual Practice

As a part of the new agenda sequence, the placing of the devotion and check in was moved to the middle of the meeting, following committee updates. There is a new intention to link the devotion with the area of discussion that is the focus for the meeting. This month Amanda led an exercise looking at five behaviors of accountable teams—growth, care, authenticity, safety, and health. Council was asked to reflect on which behaviors are examples of operating within these areas, and which area resonates with you individually. Following the check in, Amanda distributed a second list of behaviors of trauma informed teams for further reading and reflection. This was a preface to our continued reflection on meeting culture and expectations.

Pastor's Report

As the theme of her report, Pastor Karen set up two underlying themes. What am I observing, and what do I think Church offers as gift? She observed anxiety, overload of information, in worship more specifically an energetic move, more explicit community building during worship. She asked rhetorically, where do you locate yourself in that? Church offers a community waiting for you, opportunity to sing together, weaving of space with texture, celebration, variability, times of prayer with variety, meaning and expansion. Something tactile and tangible, the power of Baptism, longevity—a place that maybe seems safe, flexibility—arc of what it takes to engage people, creativity—a space for, specifically the importance of the things we take for granted at a time in people's lives can give them something deep and wide. This all impresses upon us the importance of one service.

There have been two and a half years of a lot of challenge, and the blessing now of a good exit, learning from those challenges, both technically, and also with a non-anxious stance. A learning too of boundaries, becoming realistic about who we are, setting accurate expectations and noted gaps, space to process as a team. There is seen growth in community life.

More narrowly, Organizing for Mission cohort is meeting in DC October 24th-26th at Luther Place. Council is asked to attend at least one portion to provide context and voice of Luther Place's current context.

She will be on vacation August 19th through September 3rd, returning to the office on September 4th. There is a plan in place with Justin, Sarah, Susan Boyle and Jason Chestnut, as well as a local Pastor for needed emergency pastoral support. This plan is disseminated via the e news and known to the congregation.

President's Report

Tara stated again for council that this format is a pilot we're trying out, seeing if adjusting the order of business helps with the flow of meetings. Part of this is a commitment to accomplishing fewer things, and being realistic about the length and parameters needed for discussion to reach agreement and genuine full participation. There will be an emphasis on tying our time of devotion and check in to the themes of our discussion time to follow. There will be time left for a president's report to allot room for any needed business that needs to be considered by Council that comes up with shorter notice.

The focus of this report is to raise some of the themes and outcomes of the Churchwide Assembly. As some examples, the ELCA declared itself a sanctuary body, and offered an apology for white supremacy, but it also failed to pass a resolution to join the Poor People's Campaign. There is an evident pattern of blindness, declining to take actions that could have a positive impact. These churchwide patterns apply to us too. We are committing as a council to better identify those patterns in ourselves, and our decision processes, so that we can slowly turn those patterns around. We will be deliberate to explore our leadership choices and approaches, centering our impact, and the impact we want to have that is in line with our values.

As a reminder, Lenny Duncan is coming to Luther Place for a book talk on "Dear Church A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S." on September 23rd at 7 pm.

For our discussion, I've distributed our expectations of council members into three areas.

- 1) Commitments of Council Members
- 2) How we prepare for meetings
- 3) How we interact during meetings

Our discussion included the first two area, leaving the conversation for how we hope to interact during meetings for our September discussion.

As changes, we discussed thoughts on worship attendance requirements, and whether and how to ask council members to be visible in the community life of the church, spending time being thoughtful in language.

It was decided that committee reports will be submitted by Tuesday night, 48 hours prior to the Council meeting.

Tara is summarizing these changes and will distribute a final changed list once consensus is reached.

The below list reflects our original starting point.

Church Council Commitments

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(as discussed at a June 2015 meeting + amended/approved at June 2018 meeting)

**original commitments included for reference*

Addition: how are we rooted as a community, able to bring Jesus centered into our leadership and relationship practices? (Proposed by Tara—connected to prayer and one on ones)

Meetings happen on 2nd Thursday of the month from 6:30-8:30 pm; discussed moving them to 3rd Thursday (will determine outcome)

- Minutes and committee reports are due to Council the Monday before each meeting.
- Please notify the Executive Committee a week in advance if you'd like something on the meeting agenda. The agenda for the meeting will be provided electronically in advance of the meeting and you'll have the opportunity at the start of each meeting to ask for a change. (Vice President will send out the agenda)
- Our meetings will begin at 6:30 PM over food. Food will be ordered in advance so we can start on time. You're encouraged to contribute financially to cover the cost of the meal. You can donate via text by texting the dollar amount and "hospitality" to +12028166673
- Our target adjournment time is 8:30 PM.
- We agreed that "what we say at Council, stays at Council." This means we will respect the confidentiality of sensitive topics we discuss. (Make suggestions for note taking guidelines)
- We also agreed to be mindful of how we speak to one another (API = assume positive intent). Opinions are not facts, and we agreed to express ourselves in a way that does not conflate the two ("In my opinion . . ."). Along the same lines, we agreed to speak for ourselves (using "I statements" instead of "we statements.").
- The Executive Committee will ensure there are opportunities during meetings for members to provide feedback.
- We acknowledged that Council members have roles to play on various committees and as counters after 10:30 am worship.
- We affirm that cultivating broad participation of congregation members in ministry teams and committees is essential to a healthy congregation. Therefore, to encourage such participation, shared leadership, and self-care, we agree that council members shall not serve on more than three Council-directed committees or teams. (Proposed suggestion to limit to 2)
- We agreed to meet one-on-one with another member of the Council/staff once a month. (Proposed suggestion for accountability and signup structure) (Proposed suggestion to develop a dance card and distribute at next council meeting)
- We acknowledge that Christ is with us when we are together as a group. When conversations get difficult, we will take a Holy Pause, which will allow us to stop, regroup, and come back together to listen and move forward.
- We agree to limit technology to what is necessary and to step outside if they need to focus on a phone conversation or text. We will stay focused and connected to each other.
- We will practice Culture Checks, which will allow us to take time in the meeting to let each of us express what they appreciate and/or are thankful for. (Proposed suggestion to connect to commitment around how we treat each other, connect to practice at end of meeting, connect to check in at beginning of meeting, unresolved regarding how to use this commitment specifically)

**Proposed Additions:*

- Commitments around how meetings are run, and how we want to relate to each other

- Commitment to praying for one another
- Idea to revisit in 3-6 months

Closing Reflection/Prayer

Council recited the Lord's Prayer in closing.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for at 6:30pm in the All Saints Room of Luther Place on September 19th, 2019.

Submitted by: Amanda Lindamood, Secretary, 2019-2020