



Luther Place Congregational Council Meeting Minutes
September 19th, 2019
Luther Place, All Saints Room

Present: Tara Hogan, Pastor Karen Brau, Doug Walter, Emma Northcott, Amanda Lindamood, Michael Wendt, Einar Olsen, Cathi Jones, Tom Randall, Caroline Eayrs, Elizabeth Ellis, Joan Hay, Justin Fitch

Apologies: Kate Wulff, Jay Forth

The meeting was called to order at 6:39 pm by Tara.

Agenda

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

Minutes

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

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

Congregational Meeting

The meeting is September 19th. The Executive Committee met and determined to continue our pilot time with a new agenda sequence for meetings, that was introduced at the 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, integrating the seed of a conversation about budget season, and our move to review and revise our process using a lens of racial equity.

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)

A written report was submitted, and Kate was absent from the meeting.

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

Property – Cathi

A written report was submitted by Kevin.

Personnel – Doug

This report was given in person by Doug. He acknowledged that the personnel committee are evaluating Xavier's departure, and taking a step back to understand trends and learnings. Justin and Sarah are continuing to complete new tasks in light of a vacant administrative position, and Kathleen McGuire was hired and began completing a portion of administrative duties. Finally, resumes have been reviewed and interviews scheduled for the open position of Director of Spiritual Formation.

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

Elizabeth shared that the game plan is for a giving campaign to take effect in October and last four weeks, with updates provided during worship. The intention is to utilize a letter as well as in person asks and testimony.

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

Joan stated that the Stephen's Ministers had an upcoming meeting scheduled for September 22nd, and that their membership numbers are currently high.

New Connections/Listening – Michael

Mike stated that there are no updates at this time.

Protest & Movement – Einar

Einar shared that the Protest and Movement Committee met last Tuesday, as well as participated in the DC Climate Strike and a subsequent direct action leading to road closures. Next week they are working on their budget request for this upcoming year.

Steinbruck Center Liaison—Emma

Emma reported that the Steinbruck Center held a retreat last Saturday to discuss their planning and vision. They discussed that they would like to be involved in decisions about use of the 3rd and 4th floors as Long-Range Planning continues to form their recommendations for the congregation. A written report is provided by Sarah to complement this stated area of emphasis.

Youth & Families Liaison – Caroline

Caroline provided an update in person. To remind us, Sunday school in our pilot is 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. Sunday school kicked off successfully on September 8th, and is currently engaged in aspects of worship as well as a children sermon series on Baptismal Promise based body prayer petitions. A training was held for volunteers and Chelsey and Amanda continue to write curriculum and link with Pastor Karen on how to draw from liturgy and engage children in worship. This Sunday will also be the kickoff of the Caregiver Forum for Spiritual Formation.

Long Range Planning/Deficit Reduction Task Force Liaison—Amanda

Amanda provided Council with Dick's report from their September 11th meeting, and elaborated on the focus of those discussions. Long Range Planning is discussing how to balance use of space and income generation, in addition to how to have shared expectations of new, prospective, and established tenants that align with our values as well as needs. Discussions of decisions about use of the third floor, and how to select among applicants, as well as how to generate space for congregational use are all being discussed and weighed.

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. Last 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 they find most challenging to engage in their leadership, following a reflection of two self-assessments on how white supremacy culture commonly shows up through microaggressions as well as organizational culture. Following the check in, Amanda distributed an excerpt from a pastor reflecting on how the task of fighting white supremacy relates to ministry to spark our continued institutional and individual reflection. This was a preface to our continued reflection on meeting culture and expectations, as well as our discussion of using a racial equity lens. She concluded by reading an Earth Prayer to complement our attention this week on climate justice.

Tara moved that Council to approve Luther Place as the fiscal agent for a planned Holy Land Trip for POC led by Hannah, a member of our community, and sponsored through the ELCA. Einar and Cathi seconded and the motion passed.

Pastor's Report

Pastor Karen submitted a written report, and focused in her in person sharing on the topic of using racial equity lenses. Council was asked to select a few dates to host a neighboring congregation, reciprocating their hosting of us in July. October 27 and November 3 were identified.

Pastor Karen uplifted that a shift had occurred in our relationship with LVC that was having a positive impact.

She reflected on Lenny Duncan's book talk this coming Monday, and Rev. Lamont Wells guest preaching on the following Sunday, September 29th. She also distributed the African Descent Lutheran Association's response to the ELCA's apology for slavery, as well as the ELCA's statement distributed at the churchwide assembly earlier this summer. She cited these as examples of important ways of engaging in Lutheranism. Council was asked to be present to worship to engage with Rev. Lamont as he leads the adult spiritual formation on the 29th, as well as read the provided statements and explore how to discuss together.

She briefly complimented the given update on the Sunday School pilot, discussing the reactions and the characteristics of the culture being established through Sunday School structure. On the first week of Sunday School, overlapping with first Sunday breakfast, the quality of intergenerational relating was high, and the procession and presence of children in worship added to the atmosphere of the space and the depth of the worship experience.

She stated that the theme for Organizing for Mission cohort is Spiritual Nurturing and Leadership Development, and that while Luther Place has no specific duty, council should try to be present to various aspects of the gathering if they're able. The dates are October 24th through October 27th.

The remainder of her report reflected on how the racial equity lens had been applied to Art Smart Summer Camp, and how that process had shifted areas of decision making, creating a new experience for leaders. She distributed a list of questions used in their process for council to reflect on. Key were the decision to center people who are affected, and the move to better documentation, steps and tools for replicating. Assessment of the leadership team was conducted, with an emphasis on clarifying points of contact and filling in day to day gaps. Vanessa Garcia provided this leadership, her new role made many of these shifts possible.

The take aways transferable to our budget season include having leaders in the right places, knowing people's stories, looking at equitable pay and bonuses, and inviting fuller leadership through a process of listening, that does increase the length and steps involved in these processes.

Through debriefing camp with the various leaders, summer camp will make a budget request, further committing to continuing in the vein of these begun shifts.

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.

For our discussion, Tara previously distributed 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 focused on the third area, how we interact during meetings. She uplifted the questions and factors of confidentiality, listening and participation.

Themes discussed included how the agenda is set, with a stated desire to revisit the ELCA's formerly mentioned apology and ADLA's response to it. It was brought up that we use and welcome various modes of participation, building those in more intentionally, including planning for how participation may extend outside of our meetings. It was named that we apply a principle of step up step back, monitoring how much we are participating and how that perhaps influences others' participation. It was also identified that we separate the formerly introduced tool of a culture check into two different things, first, clarifying that at any time a council member can call for a two-minute reset, but that this doesn't include talking. Additionally, an emphasis on adopting a 24-hour rule, or something in that vein, to ask us to prioritize bringing concerns forward, and to share that feedback or concern with the group.

Tara is generating a compiled list that will be distributed when finalized.

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

Finally, we returned to the question of using a racial equity lens in developing our budget for the year. It will be reported back to the finance team that we need more time, proposing not to approve our budget until January. We were given a homework assignment of coming to the October meeting having reflected on how we might imagine this changed process, as well as any ideas we might have for the council retreat.

Closing Reflection/Prayer

To close our meeting, we each naming one thing we would like to have included in the council retreat, presented as, “what is one area of learning as a leader you would like to gain during our retreat?”

Some ideas included reaching consensus on our goals, or priorities of focus in preparation of budget season, reading or watching something to provide short/mini homework for a discussion, used to set the theme, go on a walk with people in nature, provide relational introductions to each other, review churchwide assembly decisions, and engage in community building and contemplative practices.

Council recited the Lord’s Prayer in closing.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for at 6:30pm in the All Saints Room of Luther Place on October 17th, 2019.

Submitted by: Amanda Lindamood, Secretary, 2019-2020