

Newark United Methodist Church
Church Council Meeting Minutes
Monday January 28, 2008

Present: Mark Werrell, Michelle Koch, Kelly Stoneman, Betsy Kent, Rev. David Palmer, Dr. Jim Faltot, Mary Hudson, Deede Cataldi, Kathy Werrell, Roland Sharp, Rev. Mary Haggard, Jacob Sackett-Sanders, Erika Grabher, Tom Bailey, Lys Murray, Bill Clark, Darrell Sparks, Rich Lapointe, Nancy Bransfield, Bill Cox, Chris Laning, Ruth Oatman, Jane Savino, Cyndi Brooks, Diane Brahy, Donna Hitchner, Mary Bell, Dayle Thorpe, Sue Symes, Melva Sheehand, Peter Schmalz

Approval of 11/26/07 Church Council Meeting Minutes: The Church Council minutes were approved. (Roland Sharp moved, Mary Hudson seconded)

Approval of 11/26/07 Charge Council Meeting Minutes: The Charge Council minutes were approved. (Roland Sharp moved, Mary Hudson seconded)

2008 Budget – Nancy Bransfield:

Finance brought forward the recommended 2008 budget. The budget proposal was distributed for review earlier in the month.

There are a number of committees' budgets less than their minimum. SPRC's budget is less than their minimum. Their budget number was readjusted down. This incorporated the changes made when requested to cut their budget. It includes the fact that in the last council meeting we announced no raises for staff.

Trustees' budget is less than the minimum requested. This does present a risk if something happens to the structure. We have been blessed with mild weather and have not had to purchase as much oil.

Peter 2nd Finance's motion for the 2008 Budget.

Decision – The vote was taken and there was no opposition to the recommended 2008 Budget.

Nancy further spoke of the success of the Extra Mile Campaign. Total Income for the year was \$845,001. Expenses were \$859,364 which left us with a deficit of \$14363. We were able to apply an overage from last year brought it to a net zero. Everyone really stepped up during the Extra Mile campaign which raised \$53,053. Meeting the goal was truly the work of God. We close the books at the end of the year, but wait an additional few days as last remaining 2007 contributions are trickling in. We could really see God working along the way. Deede explained that we were shy of the budget by \$1500. We got few contributions totaling \$200. We received a rebate check for our safe building from the workman's compensation insurance company in the amount of \$1000. Just when we thought we would have to make up the difference somehow, we received a \$300 gift.

Deede also explained that we paid more than half of our remaining debt and brought it down to \$45,840.

Proposal for New Educational Ministry Higher Ground Academy – Donna Hitchner:

Donna distributed a proposal for a new educational ministry to be held in the afternoon hours for ages 8–15. It is intended to provide affordable alternative educational experience for children and youth who, for various reasons, are not being well served in traditional school settings. This presents an alternative education program which addresses some significant issues that make learning difficult or uncomfortable for many children.

Council members were asked to review the proposal with their committees in preparation for discussion and consideration at an upcoming council meeting. This will be targeted as an agenda item for March Church Council as the February council meeting will be a planning meeting.

More information is available. See Donna.

Donna clarified that her first choice would be to get this up and running by Sept. 2008.

Peter will take it to the next Trustees meeting for discussion.

Proposed Change of the Fiscal Year for NUMC – Nancy Bransfield:

Finance presented their proposal and timeline for changing the start of the fiscal year to coincide with the program year. Finance conducted research and received insight from Hockessin UMC who switched two years ago. Hockessin as well as Seaford UMC have been successful in changing their fiscal year.

The current fiscal year runs from Jan 1st through Dec. 31st. This would change the fiscal year to July 1st through June 30th. The proposal outlined a communication plan that preceded the start of the fiscal year for July 1 2009. The budget would remain at the 2008 allocation for the first six months of 2009. Finance and BIA would run the financial campaign in the spring of 2009.

Mark Werrell suggested an alternative schedule so that the fiscal year could start July 1, 2008, recognizing that the communication plan would need to be expedited.

Both proposals need to be shared with the committees. We will be reserving a portion of the Feb. church council planning meeting to vote a recommendation.

Letter from Chris Laning –

Chris sent a letter to SPRC and Church Council expressing concern regarding Rev. David's sermon of January 20th. January 20th was Human Rights Sunday and it was used as an opportunity to launch a campaign for the Reconciling Ministries. Chris recognized it as a good opportunity for the committee to introduce themselves. Chris was clear that he agrees that establishing the Reconciling Ministries committee is the right approach for broaching the subject with the congregation. He expressed his concerns as he perceived the whole tone of the service as politicized. In his opinion, the church is a place

where people with differing political backgrounds can come together and worship. He expressed “the service, from the choosing of the hymns, and from the way that some of the verses were chosen, definitely took on a political type of view with regard to Reconciling Ministries”. As such, he was concerned that this could distract from the worship of God and could lead to division within the congregation. Chris felt that Rev. Palmer was expressing his political beliefs, sharing where he stood and where he thought the church should stand.

Kelly Stoneman representing SPRC commented that she suggested that Chris meet directly with David to discuss his concerns. Chris did not take that action. He felt it was something that needed to be presented to the council so that the body as a whole can make the decision to take action instead of one individual.

Chris’ letter requested that the council draft a resolution affirming the position of the church that sermons motivated by personal political opinion are incompatible with Newark UMC’s mission to its members and the surrounding community.

There were disagreeing views. Roland expressed his view that it is appropriate for the pastor to express moral leadership from the pulpit without filtering or watering down the message to the point where people may not sense the importance or the urgency of engaging in the issue.

Jim spoke to varying approaches to worship. One approach may be where the church is an experience where you can leave the world outside so that you can have pure worship of God. Another approach says we are in the world. We are to be a change agent for the world to help bring about change that brings us closer to the realization of the kingdom of God here on earth.

Kathy shared how the Empowerment Center was another controversial topic. It took a long term investment in educating us and others about the issue. We all learned from it. Likewise, this will take time to evaluate.

Individuals shared that David has been very clear, in various forums that we as a congregation may not ever get to the point where we say we are affiliated with Reconciling Ministries. We need to go through an educational process so that the congregation can make an informed decision. David added that we need to be willing to talk about the topic.

David shared that the sermon was his 3rd sermon for school. When he first outlined the process it included racism only. The Incarnational Translation Team said that he needed to address all the issues of the ways people are excluded. That included sexual orientation. At the time of the sermon David did not even know where the various political platforms stand on the issue. He further expressed that if we are not willing to talk about it, and not willing to hear about it in Sunday worship, it will be the elephant in the room that we tip toe around. It will be the thing that divides us without even knowing that it divides us. For us to go forward as a strong church, we need to find ways to talk about the tough stuff. He expressed his distress that Chris did not come and talk to him, even upon counsel from SPRC.

Kelly mentioned that she has not had any other congregational members express concern about the sermon.

David did share that there was one other person who shared how a part of the sermon could have been viewed as political content. He made reference to a particular illustration. As such, David took the illustration out of the 11am sermon because he did not want it to be political. David is open to the feedback and values when people come and discuss what they heard.

Others gave personal testimony to how they were moved in a positive way by the Jan. 20th sermon.

Sue Symes invited Chris to join the Reconciling Ministries team to continue the dialog on the Reconciling Ministries topic.

Committee Reports –

Trustees – Peter Schmalz:

We are in the middle of our Storage Improvement project. We need representatives from each of the committees to help with our storage inventory. We should try to dispose of what we can. We also want to assess future storage needs of the committees so we can reallocate what we have.

The kitchen clean up is underway with the help of Diane Brahy.

The offices will be closed on March 6th. Staff will be in and it has been designated as a clean up day.

SPRC – Kelly Stoneman:

The second covenant workshop was held on Jan 12th.

We had our Christmas dinner with the staff.

We are working on the Handbook updates.

Worship – Roland Sharp:

The Christmas Eve services went well.

We are planning through the Easter season. We will have our traditional Ash Wednesday Service at noon. We will have a 7pm Family service. Following Palm Sunday we will have the Passion throughout the week. We will have the 4 regular services on Sunday plus a 6:30am Sunrise Service.

Outreach – Mary Hudson:

Angel Tree was a success. We will do Angel Tree again in 2008. We have asked for Newark only zip codes.

We received a letter (Mary distributed) from one of the inmates whose family benefited from Angel Tree. Mary responded with an open invitation to our church family. She received yet another correspondence and Mary sent the Upper Room to her.

We have had 850 contacts at the Empowerment Center, 400 unique visitors. We are now starting to document our past results.

The supply of Go Bags is low. Please feel free to donate more Go Bags. You can leave them in the Empowerment Center.

We will be adding Fridays to the Empowerment Center's schedule. Mary Berlin will be working in the center. She has lived the life that these people live. She was on the street at age 16.

January 2nd was our 1st Code Purple night. We had one client. We had eleven people on our 2nd Code Purple night.

Membership Committee – Dayle Thorpe:

We are still organizing the 9 sub-committees. We have about 30 people.

We added the Fellowship Time committee. It includes the folks that assist with coffee time.

The Finders of Lost Sheep sub-committee is now called the Congregational Connections sub-team. They focus on contacting church members who have been "absent" for some time to see if there is anything the church can do to assist and to let them know we hope to see them in church again soon. The High School Graduates sub-team keeps in touch with high school grads that have left town to pursue other interests.

Lys is working on Recognition. We are defining what recognition is.

New Membership Orientation is another new sub-committee. The last Sunday in Feb and the first two Sundays in March will be our next new membership sessions. We will need representatives from each committee to attend the 3/2 new member class from 5-6pm. We will be recruiting shepards for the new members. They next class will be joining on Easter Sunday.

We identified how the Greeters magically appear. Karen Noble has been arranging for Greeters. She is now part of our First Contact team.

Sunday School – Mary Bell:

Sunday School is going really well. We are getting ready to make Valentines.

They are getting ready to do their mission for the spring. Mary made a note about the Grab Bags.

Adult Ministry – Donna Hitchner:

We are starting a new Women's Ministry in March. It will be called Dinner & a Movie or Chick Flix. The first one will be held on 3/28.

Children & Family Ministry – Diane Brahy:

G.R.E.E.N. Team is having a candy fundraiser to sponsor their trip to Orchard Hill.

We had our Family Fun Night. We previewed the new VeggieTale movie. We had 69 in attendance. The kids had pizza and did crafts. The next one is 3/7.

United Methodist Women – Jane Savino:
UMW is having their soup sale.

Singles Ministry – Jane Savino:
We had our first meeting. We are throwing around ideas. A group may go do the pancake dinner together. We will be meeting each month on the 4th Sunday of the month.

Music – Betsy Kent:
The Newark Symphony will be performing on 2/9 at 8pm.. They also have an interfaith choir. Five of our choir members will be performing a work by Randall Thompson called Frostiana which is based on the poetry by Robert Frost. There is a fee ~\$8.

Congregational Care – Ruth Oatman:
A new Stephen Ministry class starts on 2/10, which will include 4 full-time and 2 woman who cannot participate all the time.

We are still having an issue in our Hospital Ministry with getting notified when hospital patients are admitted through the Emergency room. Jim and George Athill have both talked to the chaplains at the hospital and it is on their agenda for their monthly meeting. In the meantime, if you know of anyone admitted through the Emergency Room let the church know. About 50% of the people get admitted through the Emergency room and we are not notified.

Methodist Men – Rich LaPointe:
We continue to have our Men's Breakfast on the 3rd Saturday of the month.

The upcoming breakfast in Feb. is our Sweetheart breakfast.

Our bowl-a-thon is on Sat. 2.2, which is our big fund raiser. Last year we raised ~\$1400.

Wesley Foundation – Darrell Sparks:
Darrell asked if Church Council would like regular representation let him know.

Lay Leadership – Kathy Werrell:
We are already working on recruiting for the class of 2011.

One important change is in SPRC. Kelly has been chair of SPRC. Jerry Swalley has been the vice-chair and will become chair immediately. Mike Grainger will assume the vice-chair through 2008. The vice-chair represents SPRC at the Finance meetings.

We now have a Music sub-committee of Worship. Vick Carter, Kelly Garrett, Sarah Gaines, Maria Lutz. This group will assist in coordinating things like

Music Factory, the George Kirk series, solicit feedback from the congregation, etc.

Denise McDowell would like the guidelines re-evaluated and changed for the Endowment committee to allow more at-large members. The guidelines currently state that the Endowment committee has a total of 8 members with only 3 members being at-large.

This will be discussed at the Trustees meeting. The recommendation will be to have a max. of 3 at-large members per class year. This recommendation would need to be approved at a Charge Conference.

The following need to be affirmed:

Congregational Care Team: Ginny Johnson (Health & Wellness) and Libby Behnke (Hospital Visitation)

Membership Committee: Ginny Johnson, Lore Sackett and Karen Noble (all on First Contact Hospitality); Sue Stauffer (Membership Records); Varina Caton & Mark Deshon (New Member Orientation); Lys Murray (Membership Recognition); Rob Bartley, Grace Owen, and Lys Murray (all on Outreach to H.S. Graduates); and Elizabeth Bundick with Eunice & Bill Clark Sr. (Congregational Connections).

Decision: all candidates were affirmed by unanimous vote.

Communication – Bill Clark:

We will be requesting the use of some Memorial Funds to purchase equipment to make copies of the sermons on dvd so that we can share them with shut ins. We will be attending the Trustees meeting for approval.

We are currently recording the sermons and making them available on the website. We will be compiling a list of the shut ins. We will have an article in the Feb Parish notes announcing that we will be providing the dvds to shut ins.

Pastors' Comments –

Mary shared that we had over a 120 people at the Chili Cook off. The Youth are preparing for Youth Sunday on 5/4. The theme will be “So now what?”

Mary had sales forms for the subs for Wesley Foundation. She also reminded folks of the Pancake Supper on 2/5.

Jim shared the Lenten activities. David will be preaching a sermon series in SonSpirit. Jim will be preaching a sermon series in 11am Liturgical. We will have Taize every Wednesday at 7pm. We will have a soup and study session focusing on the Spiritual Disciplines at 5:30pm each Wed. We will stop at 6:45 so that people can go to David's series or Taize.

David mentioned that the sermon series at 11am will be the same sermon series at the other services that he's preaching that day. So the 8am and 9:30 am will get the same sermon.

Unbinding the Gospel is helping us to understand Evangelism. This is part of the Heath Team activities.

David shared his observation and assessment of the time spent by the clergy in committee meetings. David would prefer to use some of that time conducting a bible study. He would like to have some type of bible study all year round. He believes that there may be more effective uses of the clergy time.

David was on retreat with clergy colleagues from western and central NY. This was their 15th year together. It has become a circle of good friends who absolutely trust each other and feel comfortable with talking about anything we want to.

Closing Prayer – Mary Haggard

Committee Representation at Church Council Meetings: Please be sure to send a representative in the event that Committee Chairpersons cannot attend.

Next Meeting: The next meeting is Monday, February 25, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. This meeting will be a planning meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Michelle Koch
NUMC Council Secretary