

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

Present: Mark Werrell, Michelle Koch, Betsy Kent, Jim Faltot, Mary Hudson, Kathy Werrell, Roland Sharp, Jacob Sackett-Sanders, Tom Bailey, Ruth Oatman, Jane Savino, Donna Hitchner, Mary Bell, Dayle Thorpe, Bryan Everett, Chuck Mason, Deede Cataldi, Diane Brahy, Jerry Swalley, Mary Haggard, Haig Stubblebine, Christina Read, Erika Grabher, Cyndi Brooks, Sue Symes, Peter Schmaltx, David Palmer, Chris Laning, Butch Read, Cathy Drew, Bob Cronin

Devotion – Mark Werrell

Approval of 3/31/08 Church Council Meeting Minutes: The Church Council minutes were approved. (Roland Sharp moved; Ruth Oatman seconded)

Outreach Motions for the Empowerment Center & Code Purple – Mary Hudson:

1. Newark United Methodist Church will continue to host the Newark Empowerment Center in the Wilson Room through March 2009.
Decision: The motion passed by unanimous vote.
2. Newark United Methodist Church will host Code Purple sanctuary in rotation with other participating faith communities for the winter season 2008/09.
Decision: The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Property Purchase – David Palmer:

There is an opportunity to purchase the property on 83 E. Main St. NUMC has been inquiring about the property for about a year. We recently heard that there is a proposed bid on the building by the University of Delaware. Christina School District will be voting on that offer at their next school board meeting being held at Newark High School on Tuesday 5/6 at 7:30pm.

Some members got together with the Board of Trustees on 4/27 to discuss the possibility of NUMC purchasing the building. We need to move quickly therefore this is being brought to council tonight. We would begin a process to assess the possibility of making a bid on the property. It will include: 1) putting a funding plan place 2) conveying it to the congregation 3) at some point the plan would have to be approved by the District Committee on Church Building & Location 4) approved by a charge conference, preferably a church conference. All this needs to happen before we could provide a proposal to the school.

In the meantime we need to go to the school board meeting on 5/6 and request that they postpone making a decision for two months while we put our proposal together. We would like to tell them that we have allocated up to \$75,000 to use

to explore the property and hire a lawyer so that we are ready with the official proposal.

We got a majority vote from the members of the Endowment team to loan the church up to a maximum of \$75,000 for fees associated with evaluating the property.

David read the letter he will be sending to the congregation regarding the intention to pursue purchasing the property.

David envisions utilizing the property as a separate campus. It could possibly be used for SonSpirit and family-focused ministry. It also gets us more parking.

Kathy indicated that U of D would not share specific plans but their vision for Main St from Chapel St. to the railroad tracks is a much more user-friendly, lively, dynamic main street that doesn't shut down after 5pm except for bars and pizza parlors. Rumor has it that they do not want to pay more than the assessed value of \$1.6M.

She added that this is a major leap of faith for us to finance the purchase and the renovations that would be needed. However, if we were able to that in such a way that we could open the doors to the University for collaboration down the road, maybe some of that could offset some of the costs.

The property is deed restricted and must be used for educational purpose.

David also read the letter to the Christina School Board which cc'd the boards Executive Secretary and Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Lillian Lowery.

Butch Read spoke to Dr. Lowery. She appreciated being forewarned. We need to have everything into them by Monday 5/5. An executive session will be held prior to the board meeting. They will discuss the offer from U of D. They would also discuss our request. It is assumed that they will take the vote at the public part of the board meeting and we will get our answer at that time.

David will appear before the school board and represent our request that they postpone their decision on the offer to give NUMC time to assess making a bid on the property. It would be great to have church members present. The biggest reason for making a public statement at that time is because the press will be there. The press will be getting a copy of the letter. Butch further added that he believes that it is the board's fiduciary responsibility to the tax payers to try to get as high a price for the property that they can, if there is another party interested in placing a bid, they should give us some time.

David also shared a piece of history. Deede uncovered a letter from April 25, 1932 from the Newark Public Schools. The letter affirmed the decision that the school had approved that NUMC utilize the Main St. building for Sunday School.

Jane started a discussion on how we would be able to support the building going forward. It was acknowledged that the building would not be available for use right away. There are renovations that will need to be made. All of this needs to be considered in the funding plan.

Motion - Cathy Drew moved that NUMC move forward with a plan to assess purchasing 83 E. Main St. The first step will be requesting Christina School District to defer a decision on a current offer. We are authorizing the allocation of up to \$75,000 for assessment, which will be borrowed from Endowment under the current loan procedures at a rate of 4%.

Erika Grabher 2nd the motion.

Decision - The motioned passed with all approvals except 1 oppose and 2 abstain.

Higher Ground Academy – Donna Hitchner:

The proposal is coming back to council for a vote.

It is unclear if the program will be able to start by September.

The revised proposal scaled back the number of rooms needed to 1 room.

The Academy is still looking for wireless network access. Computers would be acquired outside of the church.

Trustees discussed and found the proposal reasonable. It was unclear whether this is church sponsored or if it is an independent activity that is asking the church to grant space. If it is church sponsored, there would be some additional costs. We would expect that similar to the preschool, this academy would make a contribution to the church's general budget to offset the cost for utilities, wireless installation and maintenance. If it is not a church sponsored activity, we would want to negotiate a rental fee for the use of the space. That would also require the Academy to get its own insurance. If church sponsored, it would be covered under our insurance.

Donna clarified that the Church is requested to sponsor the Academy.

Roland Sharp moved to accept the original Higher Ground Academy proposal presented at the 1/28/08 Church Council meeting, as amended with the following addendum:

It is proposed that the entity, Higher Ground Academy, be separated into two parts: Higher Ground Hybrid Learning Program and Higher Ground Virtual

Learning Center. The virtual learning component can serve to increase potential enrollment in the overall program, while reducing space needs in the church and cost to participants. In using a hybrid approach, the space needs can be reduced to one classroom during a weekday afternoon, and occasional use of larger spaces and/or kitchen facilities on a Friday night or Saturday (no monitor required). The hybrid approach would deliver the bulk of the instruction via the Virtual Learning Center, an online educational community. Participation in the HG VLC would include a set number of on-site ours for tutoring or assessment. Parents/students would make appointments with the educational facilitator for these hours. Additional on-site hours would be chargeable on a per-hour basis. Participation in special weekend projects/activities also would be chargeable separate from normal subscriptions/tuition costs. Families needing the complete, daily afternoon program would he that option, but the costs would remains as stated in the earlier proposal for that specific educational service.

Kathy Werrell 2nd the motion.

Decision – The motion passed with 18 approve; 0 oppose; 3 abstained

The Higher Ground Academy would have a separate board, similar to the pre-school. One of the board members would sit on the Christian Ed team.

NUMC would cover the Academy under its existing liability insurance (just like we do the pre-school). We have not pursued whether or not this additional program would incur additional cost.

SPRC did not have a problem with the proposal.

Pastor's Comments – David Palmer:

David shared a communication with the congregation regarding the ongoing conversation about how NUMC will define inclusiveness. It will directly address articulating the purpose of the Reconciling Ministries Network team and to directly address some of the misconceptions, rumors and fears. David read the letter. In addition, the letter included NUMC's inclusion statement and while it mentions 'everyone' and was meant to include all people it does not make a strong enough statement about our intentions to override public perceptions. Many local churches are public with anti-gay actions and statements. Some of them are United Methodist churches. Some UMCs have expressed different viewpoints than how we have lived here at NUMC. As a result, the perception is that Gays, Lesbians, Bi-sexuals and Transgenders are not welcome at church and hence are not welcome at NUMC. A public statement is needed to overcome that perception.

NUMC has some options. 1) Disband the RMN team 2) Rename the RMN team. Naming it RMN has perhaps automatically linked it to everything about the Reconciling Ministries Network organization and perhaps that is all people see.

3) Leave RMN team as is or 4) Adopt an inclusion statement and do either 1, 2, or 3 and clarify the purpose of the team.

Ruth Oatman has a proposed the following inclusion statement: Newark United Methodist Church is place with “open hearts, open minds and open doors”. We welcome you in the name of Jesus Christ our savior regardless of your race, ethnicity, former religious affiliation, age, gender identity, social or economic status, physical or mental ability, or sexual orientation. We are all God’s beloved children.

The order was chosen by the order that they appear in the Discipline. All are addressed in the Discipline as people we should include in church. It is David’s hope and belief that what is necessary for a healthy church is 1) good conversation, good dialogue 2) respect for differing views and 3) a desire to live and work together regardless of our differing views.

David read from various parts of the Discipline regarding homosexuality. He referenced paragraph 161, subsection G of that paragraph, paragraph 162, and resolution #33 from 2008 General Council.

Tom B. expressed that there may be people who do not know who makes up the RMN team.

Dayle suggested that our statement is very inclusive and that perhaps that we are focusing so much on the homosexual aspect that we are losing the intent. David suggested that the RMN team to keep the conversation going, to scale down the numbers and include people with diverse opinions.

Adult Ministries intended to have a meeting for those of differing opinions could come and express their views.

David took responsibility for recommending that the aforementioned Adult ministry meeting not occur. He felt that it is not helpful to gather like-minded people to voice their opinions with out some expected outcome, especially when we say we are trying to engage in conversation. When you have all of one mind together who are upset, it tends to not be productive.

Chris Laning mentioned that what may be missing is the right forum to bring people with differing views out. Some people may not consider the RMN forum an open forum to share their differing views.

Mark shared that RMN team members have asked by some groups to send one or two people to attend their forum to listen to their views.

Jim commented that while we need to be focusing on the degree to which we are inclusive as a community of faith at NUMC, the agenda of the larger RMN

movement got intertwined with that. People were getting upset about appointment and ordination issues. He suggested that we separate that out and make the primary issue “what kind of statement do we want to make about what kind of church we are here”. He added that he believes we need to be very intentional about it.

Kathy suggested that David send separate letters for the property purchase and the inclusiveness concern. Mary Hudson agreed.

David stated that he will send the letter only around the building. Everyone needs to pray about this and we will come back to it next month. We need to pray, have good conversations with each other, we need to embrace each other, we need to have coffee with each other we need to enjoy each other.

David concluded his report with that we got through Easter, he got his final paper in and is now scrambling to do the next work due.

Additional Notes:

Communications team is looking for volunteers to help with producing the cd of the sermons. If anyone has someone in mind, see Chris Laning.

Tom Bailey wants to start an SAT tutoring group. He would like to utilize a room at the church. He would like to start the beginning of June.

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 Tuesday, May 27, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. It will include a Charge Conference.

Respectfully Submitted,
Michelle Koch
NUMC Council Secretary