

Hilltop United Methodist Church

Church Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 20, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

Present via video conference: John Phelps, Don Putzier, Derrick Galinat, Stacy Vanderwerf, Pastor Matt Sipe, Kerry Rausch, Jocelin Reynolds, Karla Lassonde, Paulette Adams, Karin Gavin, Mark Wright and Michelle Behsman.

The meeting was called to order by Don Putzier, and the council opened the meeting with the Lord's prayer.

Approval of minutes: The February 2020 Church Council minutes were approved by consensus.

Bible Study: Pastor Matt presented a study of Hebrews 12:14-29, from the Benedictine Prayer book. A timely passage during this time of uncertainty while we quarantine to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Pastoral Update: Pastor Matt suggested a new agenda with first an update on church business in the last week, since Governor Walz's order limiting gatherings of more than 50 people and the use of social distancing. He shared the changes and plans that have been put in place in order to continue our ministry. March 15 was the first Sunday we tried the live streaming on YouTube and Pastor Matt extended gratitude to the tech team and Michael Menne for working over the weekend to prepare for the launch. Moving forward and in an effort to limit the number of people present at one time for the live worship, there will be just ONE WORSHIP SERVICE ON SUNDAY AT 10:30 AM. Matt has prepared the sanctuary for better live streaming and the service will be a blend of two hymns and two contemporary songs, with just piano and guitar only. The live stream can be found on YouTube and it will be shared to our Facebook page. As we will not be meeting in person for worship, members who typically give each week by check are being directed to mail their donations to the church, as ministry needs continue and their gifts are important at this time.

Matt shared that it has been an overwhelming week of ministry. He received many calls from people in need and he worked with many in leadership to ensure that all ministry needs are met. Plans are in place to continue ministry from a distance. There will be a live Wednesday bible study to take the place of Connect Groups, and Jocelin and Matt are working on similar plans for the youth. Karin Gavin is preparing for Sunday school materials to be available for families. Marj Blommel and Jean Jackson are calling all members age 70 and above to check on their welfare and ask how we might minister to them at this time. Any who would like to help with these phone calls can contact Marj at 507-317-3745.

Members are being directed to our private Facebook group, which is different from our public Facebook page, to share needs, prayer concerns, and ideas on how we can continue to be the hands and feet of Christ. The church office will be closed and church business will be conducted via email; Michelle at office@mankatohilltop.org and Matt at matt@mankatohilltop.org. Those in need of EMERGENCY PASTOR CARE should contact 507-201-9241. Matt will receive those messages even if his phone is off. All of these changes were shared in the weekly electronic update that was sent today. We will continue to send these updates each Thursday at 5:00 pm.

Pressing Needs/Financial Concerns: Pastor Matt said that the Annual Conference was discussing financial relief for churches, due to potential financial loss from the lack of in-person giving. Matt is planning to prepare a letter to be mailed to members in the next week to address this concern, but there are still unknown factors. He suggested that we look at postponing our April apportionment, should the Conference not take steps for relief. He also stated that it may be necessary to furlough or cut back hours for our staff, depending on the length of the quarantine and financial outlook. Mark stressed the importance of having a plan and it was decided that he, Matt, Don, would meet in person at the church on Saturday at 11:00 am to forecast and develop a plan.

Brainstorming: There were suggestions from council on encouraging regular giving from those who are able, like promoting auto-tithing to those who aren't currently using this service and also a drive through Communion service on the first Sunday of the month which would also give members an opportunity to drop off their donations. There was also discussion about a drive in Easter service, perhaps in a larger parking lot. Matt welcomed the ideas, but also stated that he cannot do this alone. Karla suggested a smaller team to flesh out ideas for drive through communion/Easter service. Those indicating an interest in working on this team: Jocelin/Tammy, Kerry, Mark, Darrin, Karin/Todd. Names also thrown in the ring were John Harrington the Bob/Terry.

Karla also spoke of our need as the church leadership team to transition our roles from leadership to caregiving, stating the importance of looking out for others. Matt seconded this need, as he shared that he is dealing with brokenness daily. Matt suggested a separate group that would work collectively to vision on ways that we can minister differently during this time of change.

Committee Reports: Necessary reports were shared via email with no further discussion at the meeting.

The meeting was closed with Don sharing St. Joseph's prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Michelle Behsman