

Hilltop United Methodist Church

Church Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 21, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

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

Council opened with the Lord's Prayer.

Approval of minutes: Church council reviewed the minutes from April. Paulette made a motion to approve minutes, with a second by Karla. Motion passed. No additions to the agenda.

Bible Study: Pastor Matt led a bible study on the 14th chapter of Romans, based on a book by Bob Jewett. The scriptural message explains how we can love one another through the difference of our convictions. Apostle Paul expounds on Jesus' teaching to not be a stumbling block to our brother or sister in Christ. Christ has died for all, and all are in need of Christ's redemptive love. The church has always been known for how it treats the poor and the outcast in our society – how we treat one another. The council reflected on the reading and added these reflections: everything that does not proceed from faith is sin, keep it simple, love God and love your neighbor, and do no harm. Romans 14:19 Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbringing. Matt closed with prayer.

Calendaring: Matt and Michelle are working on one page on the website that provides all online resources. Jocelin and Terry have organized a graduation recognition on June 7. Stacy is working on summer connect groups.

Finance Report: Mark provided an overview of the April finance report. Giving for April is below last year, but one year does not make a trend. We are in good shape because of the PPP loan. Kerry made a motion to approve the finance report, seconded by Stacy. Motion passed.

Church management software: Michelle provided an overview of what new church management software has to offer and she and Matt have identified Realm as a superior system that will provide better functionality for both staff and members. There is a branded mobile app that will be launched by this fall for member use. Members can sign up for groups and events, check in for ministry activities, view and print giving statements, and communicate with members and groups.

Reopening plans: Matt opened with prayer. Don asked that council consider Wesley's three simple rules as we plan for reopening the church.

1. Do no harm
2. Do all the good you can
3. Stay in love with God

It was also noted that as God is always with us – our church is always open. Each council member had an opportunity to share their thoughts having reviewed the MN Department of Health COVID-19 guidelines and the Minnesota Annual Conference Phased Re-Gathering Plan. A motion was made to accept the Bishop's recommendation and use the plan as guidance and the council will reassess monthly plans to reopen. The motion passed.

Don closed in prayer. Meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm

Respectfully submitted, Michelle Behsman

Mark: liberties and freedom should go back to church as it was allowing people to worship as they feel comfortable. Insurance company guidelines are severe. Anything else is a poor substitute.

Derrick: Concern with Insurance side, may have to follow their guidelines to retain insurance.

Kerry: Mixed feelings – fear for those in high risk categories, as they are most likely to want to be in attendance

Karla: consider the weight put on leadership Pastor Matt, does not want to build a new way of doing things Online is a place to shine. People tend to not listen to medical data.

Stacy: Creative caring leadership can create connectiveness Keep us safe but connected.

Karin: Personal responsibility - assume own risk - all or nothing – people are missing social connectedness – what about people who cannot participate in online worship.

Don: medical view how can we honor the most vulnerable population. Why reopening our church is different - built on trust and faith – continued online presence. Need to follow safest guidelines faithfully MDH. Concern with health insurance coverage. Work on Reopen plan.

Paulette: Sacraments are important. Would like to see numbers go down before we gather again.

Not a fan of all the restrictions.

Matt: Biggest concern is witness to public. “the COVID church” and bad press affecting future ministry. We care for our community. Not comfortable going against Bishop’s guidelines. Focus on great online content. Church may never go back to what it was.....

Don: commonality, safe and faithful. Are we comfortable with the Bishop’s guidelines? Timeframe – how much time do we need to prepare for reopening? Do we need to clarify a window of reopening.

Michelle

Matt: Continue online worship through the worship August.

Don: Refers to Derrick for timeframe on reopening according to life insurance.

Stacy: We decide on measures we will take before reopening? We decide on level of safety to pursue.

Don: Encourage people to wear mask and wash hands at clinic, but people will still do as they wish.

Matt: Ins co have dropped coverage

Derrick: you will have some coverage if you reopen

Matt: what Paulette said that cases are going up

Paulette: all cases in blue earth county have been community

Matt: employees will not want to come back

Paulette: singing is an issue

Don: singing aerosolized

Michelle: wait for Bishop’s guidelines

Matt: in favor of following the Bishop’s guidelines

Kerry: are there ramifications for churches that go against Bishop’s guidelines

Mark: governor moves the goalpost and the bishop tends to follow the governor. What happens when numbers spike? Concerned about damage and fallout

Matt: toughest days will be when the numbers spike, we are reaching new people with online service

Karla: going into fall, monthly discernment, church knows that we love them

Don: consider accepting the Bishop’s recommendations, revisiting this month by month as Karla suggested.

Karin: in agreement

Paulette: monthly reassessing is good. Guidance on funerals.

Don: thoughts on moving forward

Matt: message to congregation we are following guidelines

Group to spearhead ideas for other ministry gatherings Kerry and Paulette Karin

Don: vote motion by Karla accept the Bishop’s recommendation and use this as guidance as we review monthly plans to reopen. 9 in favor 1 abstain