

Governance Council Meeting March 12, 2014 Minutes

Present: Jeanine Derr (Moderator), Doug Gaddis (Moderator-Elect), David Bennett, Kay Jansky, Paul Leistra, Amy McKee, Nancy Pielemeier, Sarah Smith, Gary Walbridge,

Ex Officio: Rev. Tim Tutt (Senior Minister), Alexis Kassim (Associate Minister), Lisa Choate (Clerk)

The meeting was held in the Westmoreland Library and started at 7:30 pm.

Spiritual Practice was led by Tim Tutt.

Consent Agenda

The **Agenda** and the following motions were approved by unanimous consent.

Minutes:

Motion 14 GC-9: The February 12, 2014 minutes were approved with two attachments: Schedule of 2014 Governance Council Meetings and GC Liaisons to Boards.

GC members accepted the Adoption of Appointments Resolutions as follows:

Motion 14 GC-10: To accept the Clerk's February 2014 report and approve dismissal of Enid Tennant as of February 10, 2014.

Motion 14 GC-11: Westmoreland Congregational United Church of Christ remunerates \$60,600 housing allowance to Senior Minister, Rev. Timothy Tutt, and \$12,000 housing allowance to Associate Minister for Education, Rev. Alexis Kassim.

(This motion is per IRS regulation that requires formal church declaration of housing amount.)

Motion 14 GC-12: To appoint John Hatch as a member of the Personnel Committee for a two-year term ending in January 2016.
Nancy Pielemeier /Doug Gaddis

Information Topics

Update on Maryland Tax Assessment pertaining to AT & T steeple rental

The Tax Assessment board denied our appeal of the property tax assessment for the lease of our steeple to AT&T and, per our lease agreement with AT&T, they have agreed to reimburse us for our payment of \$4455.79 to the State of Maryland.

We also contacted Verizon and have been informed that they are looking at other locations to lease for their cell tower and are not interested in pursuing a lease with WCUCC.

Ministerial Housing

Tim's lawyer will send a document to the GC. A church member will be appointed as the point person to negotiate on the Church's side. After discussion and preparations, this will come to a Congregational vote. The target for conclusion of an agreement is summer.

Action item: Determine who from the congregation is willing to become the point person.

Update Contract /employee status of custodial services- Next steps

Jeanine asked GC members to think about who might be able to take this complicated matter on.

Action item: Identify one or more church members who would be willing to work through this set of issues.

Update on Electronic Giving

A small group of individuals has tried the electronic transfer method and it was successful. We anticipate it will be more broadly available soon. We are also considering making a credit card option available, as it would broaden the options, including the possibility of the public donating to events, etc.

Action item: Investigate the credit card option.

Agenda for March 16 Congregational Conversation –Property and Accessibility

David Bennett presented a structure for the discussion at the Congregation Conversation for March 16, entitled “One Westmoreland Circle,” an opportunity to think about our building, its meaning, and how it can be improved. The session will be related to two new teams that the GC chartered in January: the accessibility team that is working on physical and other accessibility issues and another team that is considering short- and long-term space needs. The GC discussed a structure for the meeting and possible enhancements to the event.

Staff reports

Pastors’ Report.

Tim Tutt reported on Congregational concerns, including the deaths of four people since our last meeting: Edith Wilkerson, Jack Stickles, Margaret “Peg” Crooker, and Calvin Ninomiya. Tim also reported on the Ash Wednesday service, which included members from the French Protestant Church and the German Lutheran Church, including a choir that included members of all three congregations. We will also hold Maundy Thursday service with these congregations. Tim reminded us that the service will include feet washing, which was also a part of the Last Supper.

In the church office, Tim reported on the new copier. Mimi is also working on improving the office email and document sharing process.

Alexandro’s new music team met for the first time last night. This group will support the overall music program. Tim reminded us of the Pete Seeger sing-along on Sunday March 16.

Tim also suggested a clean-up day for the various church pantries and closets which are chock-full of miscellaneous items. The staff will set a couple of dates for volunteers to join the effort and announce them to the congregation.

Lastly, Tim noted that he wrote an article that “On Faith” picked up and some activity has resulted from that. He hopes to write again for the publication.

Alexis reported on BCE activities, including its plans for Easter and the Easter-egg hunt. BCE is also planning a kid-friendly Easter service that will run concurrently with the main service. BCE is also planning the next church year. Space issues are also on their agenda. Alexis noted that the church school rooms also need cleaning.

Clerk of the Rolls. We received this report from Janet Moyer.

Treasurer’s Report. GC members also received the Treasurer’s report by email.

Committee Reports.

Jeanine reminded members that as liaison, the role may vary from committee to committee, but the major goal is communication between that group and the GC.

Deacons: No pressing issues.

BCE: No issues this month, other than the report above from Alexis.

Outreach Ministries: They have an enthusiastic group and are doing well. They are trying to improve their understanding of what we support – the core ministries and other categories as well as budget items that support particular groups. All are very active and involved.

BMF: Gary attended part of their meeting on Sunday. BMF is planning an Easter coffee hour and will do more greeting during Lent given the increased number of visitors during this period. BMF is very focused on carrying out its rather substantial role and might need to focus on vision and strategy. There are several different roles and functions that need to be coordinated.

Finance: Discussion was delayed until later, when Trey joined later in the meeting to update GC members on suggestions regarding the Finance committee.

Property: David Bennett pointed out that the steps on Massachusetts have been patched and accessibility has been improved at the front. Windows have been installed in some of the classroom doors. Some drafty church windows have also been renovated. The focus for this group, though is accessibility. The team is looking at automatic door openers and designating spots for people with disabilities on Dalecarlia.

Personnel: This committee will have a report in April.

Nominating: This committee is looking at the timeframe and considering working closer to August, rather than the end of the year. Their question is whether any structures will change, and they would like a heads up if changes are envisioned so that they can plan.

Stewardship: No news.

Business

Finance Committee Presentation on Budgeting Procedures

Trey Holloway joined the meeting to discuss the process of budget development. In his and George Christo's opinions, the current process allows for Congregation input only very late in the process, at which point it is difficult to incorporate changes. Ideally the budget has a vision and goals behind it and Trey and George would like to have a series of conversations with the membership of the church, perhaps three or four times during the year, to determine direction. This will result in increased work for the Finance Committee, but should produce a better result. The Governance Council members were supportive and want to make sure that we create a structure that allows the committees/boards to have a voice, as well as the congregation at large. Several members noted that not all can attend these meetings for various reasons, so it would be important to share the results of public discussions so that those who cannot attend also have a voice. Focus groups might also be a reasonable option, that would allow different constituent groups to participate in the process. Jeanine asked that members give her input on next steps and process for this initiative.

Action Item: Gary, Trey, and Jeanine will come up with a plan for budget discussions and then share it with GC for approval.

Closing Prayer was offered by Tim at 9:10 p.m. and the meeting was concluded.

Next Meeting Wednesday, April 9, 2014 at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Lisa Choate, Clerk

Attachments: None