

Cornerstone United Methodist Church
Leadership Board Minutes
Feb. 6, 2024 | 6-8 pm | Kid's Jam Area

Attendees: Rev. Jim Peich, Gil Nichols, Carol Weaver, Sara Denother, Meggie Biesenthal, Jeff Wright, Bev Todd, Mike Potts, Robin Heggemeyer, Jason Winscher, Amy Hamilton, Jarrod Grant, and Jay Deshong.

Excused: Sue Suddarth

- A. Welcome—Gil Nichols
- B. Opening Prayer—Pastor Jim
- C. Devotion—Jarrod Grant
 - Jarrod's devotion focused on the theme of "Transitions." The devotion highlighted five principles to consider with transitions in the church. The five principles were: 1) Prayer 2) Planning 3) People 4) Perspective 5) Perseverance.
- D. Celebrations
 - The collaborative efforts of the youth leaders and the Trustees were highlighted with the cleaning and reorganization of the Youth Room. This space can now be better used in new ways for the youth ministry.
 - This sparked the hope of a future confirmation class. Research and efforts are taking place to make this an offering again which was positively received.
 - The positive comments continue to roll in about the new West Entrance doors and sidewalks.
- E. Congregational Input
 - Congregation members are welcome at our open Leadership Board meetings to offer feedback, ask questions, and be involved in what's occurring at Cornerstone. No congregants were in attendance at the meeting.
 - Leadership Board agendas are now posted on the wall by the sign-up bulletin board outside of the office in addition to the website and the Weekend Update email.
- F. Planning & Alignment
 - Staff Parish—Jeff Wright
 - i. A discussion was held on the initial efforts by the Trustees to use volunteers to clean the church with the retirement of custodian Terri Mendenhall. There are 11 volunteers so far and they have been doing a great job cleaning for a couple weeks now. It appears this is working at this point, but more volunteers are being sought to ensure this doesn't

become a burden for a specific group or individuals. Right now, the plan is to continue using volunteers through the end of March. It was agreed the Trustees and SPRC would keep open lines of communication on this to determine if/when/etc. we might change course. There will need to be at least a 6-week lead time to post, recruit, interview and hire a new custodian if the church moves in that direction. The proposed 2024 budget includes custodian payroll funds for April through December.

- Finance—Robin Heggemeyer/Jason Winscher
 - i. We finished 2023 strong with a great month of giving in December. This allowed us to finish the year with a surplus of \$3,721.
 - ii. Work on January totals are still taking place. January started slower with the weather early on, but through some encouragement/promotions things started to catch up. This past Sunday was a great week of giving and hopefully this is a trend that will continue in 2024.
 - iii. We are now at 32 days of reserves in our operational budget to create a stronger contingency. The goal is to be at 90 days, and as a reference we were down to 18 days at one point earlier in 2023.
 - iv. Karen Potts and Pastor Jim have started reaching out to families who have pledged but haven't started giving. The goal is to reach out through a personal, caring approach. Discretion will be used in some cases where there are known hardships.

- Trustees—Bev Todd
 - i. Bev is in initial discussions with the inspector on the need for FOG adaptations to the kitchen sink. Because we have a separate FOG tank we might qualify for an exemption. However, the inspector can't verify until he comes out to see and it will be a few months until he is able to come onsite. If we do qualify for the exemption it could save us \$5000.
 - ii. A discussion topic for a future Trustees meeting will be looking into the use of tables and switching between round and rectangular tables in the fellowship areas.
 - iii. This update led to a broader discussion on the need for set up and clean up crews before and after events. The Community Dinners ministry already has a system like this in place. There was also a discussion about posting signs with checklists on guidelines/expectations for cleaning up areas after different events. Sometimes these areas are used by outside groups or newer members so providing clarity on expectations could make it easier for everyone. The Trustees will take responsibility for working on the creation of the checklists.
 - iv. The north/modern worship entrance was discussed due to concerns the sidewalk is more prone to ice this time of year with various drainage issues. Initially the Trustees wanted to close this entrance for the next few months as they had concerns of members getting hurt and the liability for

the Trustees/church. It was determined we needed an inclement weather policy to make decisions of this nature so this entrance can still be used regularly, but then closed when the weather precipitates more caution.

1. It was determined the Trustees would create a task force to create an inclement weather policy. There was an expressed desire to ensure different groups had representation on the task force including Staff Parish (employees), Jami (office), Pastor Jim (Modern Worship & Ex-officio). Jarrod Grant will represent the Leadership Board on this group.
 2. The Trustees will also look to some members from the United Methodist Men to complete an assessment on what is causing the drainage issues at the North Entrance sidewalks and share back any thoughts on what would be needed to rectify the issues.
 3. Shorter term we have volunteers who have expressed their willingness to keep watch out for this area and clear as needed during any future inclement weather. Bev has purchased some new shovels and ice melt to help with this.
- Lead Pastor—Pastor Jim
 - i. There is excitement about the next series of Community Dinners starting tomorrow night. There are 120 registered, several are new to the church and who saw the Facebook advertisements.
 - ii. A motion was made by Jarrod and seconded by Bev to use the profits from the dessert sales at the Community Dinners to benefit the sanctuary projector fund. The Board voted, with 12 votes in favor, 0 opposed and 0 abstentions.
 - iii. Drive-thru prayer and ashes and a special service are coming up for Ash Wednesday next week. All are encouraged to attend one of the events.
 - iv. There are upcoming classes on baptism and communion which will provide a deeper look for those newer to the church or those who would appreciate a refresher.
 - v. Pastor Jim received a donation of a new Confirmation curriculum that is approximately worth \$600. He and the youth leadership will evaluate to see if this will work for a future confirmation offering.
 - vi. Pastor Jim and Jami are always looking for ways to ensure we're being good financial stewards. For example, Pastor Jim recently canceled two unused church Costco memberships saving \$60. Both of them working together continue to find ways to save money, which now totals close to \$4000 so far.
 - vii. Pastor Jim also shared some background on a funeral that he is officiating later in the week. This was a request from someone who has attended the community dinners. They didn't have a church home and reached out to have this at the church. The bereavement team will also reach out in the next few days.

G. Old Business

- Approval of January Minutes
 - i. A motion was made by Sara and seconded by Jay to approve the January minutes. The Board voted, with 12 votes in favor, 0 opposed and 0 abstentions.

- Simplified Accountability Structure Debrief
 - i. About 25 people attended the two informational sessions held for the congregation on Monday, Jan. 31st. It was led by Rev. Melissa Dodd (Conference Superintendent) from the Missouri Conference.
 - ii. A copy of Rev. Dodd's presentation was shared with all Leadership Board members prior to the meeting in their packet.
 - iii. As a follow up to the congregational information sessions, each Leadership Board member was given a chance to share their thoughts, outstanding questions, concerns, etc. about the two structures that Cornerstone UMC may select - traditional or simplified
 - iv. Cornerstone UMC currently uses the traditional structure..
 - v. There was agreement there are pros and cons with each structure.
 - vi. The group agreed that more education and information is needed for the congregation to be informed, yet this needs to be balanced with moving towards a decision sooner than later while this is at the forefront of everyone's minds.
 - vii. We will need to reinforce with the congregation that current ministry teams (e.g. backpack, UWF, UMM, Pharr, Care, Bereavement, Food Pantry, Quilters, etc.) will continue to exist regardless of which model the church chooses.
 - viii. Any change in model would purely be focused on simplifying the Trustee, Finance and SPRC teams. This is important because we don't want members to feel as if they have been left out or won't have many of the leadership and service opportunities that currently exist.
 - ix. One way for the board to engage more volunteers is through short-term task forces that utilize the expertise within our congregation.
 - x. During the discussion and sharing some detailed questions surfaced. Some questions were answered through the discussion. It was reinforced that future training would be helpful and needed regardless of which model Cornerstone UMC uses.
 - xi. Pastor Jim advised that if the Leadership Board wishes to move forward with inviting the congregation to consider a change in church structure, the next step would be for the Leadership Board to vote to ask the District Superintendent to schedule a Church Conference for the purpose having a congregational vote around changing to the Simplified Accountability Structure. At the Church Conference, the professing members present would then vote on whether to adopt the Simplified model. A $\frac{2}{3}$ majority of

- the professing members present is required to change models. There is no online, absentee, or proxy voting permitted.
- xii. Pastor Jim reinforced that Cornerstone UMC can function under both models. That said, regardless of whether we use the traditional or simplified model, Cornerstone UMC is missing or needs updated policies and procedures for a number of functions to help create more clarity and efficiency for our efforts. Therefore we have important work to do as a Leadership Board no matter which direction we go.
 - xiii. Pastor Jim stated that choosing a church structure is not his decision. The decision belongs to the professing members of the congregation. Pastor Jim shared that he will work to be the collaborative leader and pastor the church needs in either model.
 - xiv. A motion was made by Jarrod and seconded by Jay to request approval from the District Superintendent to schedule a Church Conference to vote on the Simplified Accountability Structure. The Board voted, with 11 votes in favor, 0 opposed and 1 abstention. Pastor Jim's abstention was to reinforce his previous comments of this not being his decision.
 - xv. An additional motion was made by Jarrod and seconded by Jay to create a Task Force to further educate the congregation prior to a Church Conference. This would include more informational sessions and talking points about both models (traditional and simplified). It was determined the Task Force would include Mike, Jay, and Robin, with Pastor Jim also participating in an advisory/ex-officio capacity.
 - xvi. A follow up discussion clarified the Leadership Board's role concerning the further education of the congregation. It was agreed that Leadership Board members will not lobby for one model over the other. As a Leadership Board we need to be united and our role is to inform and not persuade.

H. New Business

- o 2024 General Fund Budget Recommendation & Approval
 - i. Pastor Jim explained how the 2024 budget was developed including considering last year's expenses, anticipated 2024 expenses, ministry priorities, as well as 2024 pledges and giving. Pastor Jim, Jason, and Robin worked together to create this draft budget.
 - ii. Jason (Treasurer) then walked through the executive summary of the recommended 2024 budget with the group. This and the detailed line-item budget were provided to members prior to the meeting for our review.
 - iii. The budget was shared with the Trustees, SPRC, Bereavement and Care teams for their review and input into the broader recommendation. They were all in support of what is presented. The Finance Team also unanimously recommended the proposed 2024 budget to the Leadership Board for their final approval.

- iv. It was reinforced the budget is a guide for where our money should go and supports our priorities. Some larger expenditures will be held back until later in the year to ensure we feel confident in the new giving levels and our overall financial position for the year.
- v. One question surfaced on the specifics of the increase in advertising/marketing costs. It was noted this was for our new approach to advertising on social media which has already paid dividends for Community Dinners, etc. with hopes of attracting newer members.
- vi. A motion was made by Mike and seconded by Sara to approve the 2024 General Fund Budget as proposed. The Board voted, with 12 votes in favor, 0 opposed and 0 abstentions.
- vii. A follow up discussion on fundraisers surfaced as part of the budget discussion. All fundraisers need to start with the Finance Team. The Finance Team would then bring a recommendation to the Leadership Board for final approval.
 - 1. It was suggested the Finance Team ask all ministries if they are planning any fundraisers for 2024 so the group can evaluate and prioritize them. The goal would be to understand how often and for what purposes the church is being asked to donate in addition to the General and Building Funds. We want to be careful of donor fatigue.

- o Security Grant Application

- i. Gil explained the overall process as follow up to email he sent the Leadership Board on a possible security grant through the Federal Government. At a high level it's important to note this can only be for new expenses, not repairs or updates to existing security equipment. Also, this is a reimbursement so we would want to not spend any money until this was officially approved. The first step in the process is to complete a feasibility study. This grant can be worth up to \$150,000.
- ii. A motion was made by Maggie and seconded by Jarrod to create a Task Force led by Bev Todd to begin researching this grant opportunity. The Board voted, with 12 votes in favor, 0 opposed and 0 abstentions.

I. Announcements

- o A question surfaced if we could start hiring nursery care for larger church events. It was noted that if we do this, we have policies in place that we need to have 2 adults present and they have to be Safe Gatherings certified.
 - i. It was determined Pastor Jim will do some more research on what all this would entail and bring to the SPRC for consideration.
- o There was encouragement for the Trustees to continue the discussion on independent activities/supplies for children to use during the services. A few creative ideas were shared with the group that might reduce the concerns of

spills/accidents/etc. Pastor Jim also shared that some of the ideas will be incorporated into the worship spaces as part of the worship experience.

- A desire was expressed to consider if we could begin offering Kids Jam and Youth Group each week versus every other week to help attract more younger families. This is part of the longer term plan but more volunteers who are Safe Gatherings certified will be needed to make this possible.

J. Closing Prayer—Pastor Jim