

CUMC/WESLEY FOUNDATION CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES

April 15, 2019

Minutes of Meeting

Members Present: Brenda Allen, Joe Doolittle, Adam Faeth, Jen Hibben, Jason Janssen, Gerry Kennedy, David Orth, Jodi Risdal, Ryan Risdal, Mary Wickham, Steve Williams

Members Absent: Doug Bates, Jill Sanders

Call to Order

Chair Orth called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. and Pastor Williams provided the opening prayer.

Closed Session

Pastor Williams and members of the Logistics Team updated Church Council on the conflict transformation process. Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center is working with the church and will provide opportunities to meet with any church member.

How will the Church Council continue to do its work?

Chair Orth said that a year ago, Church Council used to be what Administrative Council is today. They would hear reports from all of the committees, go over the budgets, and discuss a lot of the day-to-day administration of the church. The *Book of Discipline* says that a church council should set the strategic plan for the church. Chair Orth said that by the time the reports were finished, there was no time left for strategic planning. So the previous Church Council formed the Future Church Team to tackle some of the questions that never got time during council meetings. The Future Church Team proposed a new structure of councils and committees to better serve the church. In that new structure, the Administrative Council and Ministries Council would handle the important administration and ministry areas of the church, and the new Church Council would look at the big picture items and strategic planning.

Kennedy explained that the basic entity of any church is a charge conference. Some pastors have charges that are multiple churches—they can have a charge conference that includes multiple churches. CUMC/WF is a one-church charge. The charge conference is the one and only official gathering of the charge. At a charge conference, all of the positions and members of other committees are approved by the charge conference. The 2019 Charge Conference for CUMC/WF was held in October, 2018. The Church Council is the administrative agency of the Charge Conference. Wickham said that the roles of the Administrative Council and Ministries Council might be part of the responsibilities that the *Book of Discipline* assigns to a church council. Kennedy said that the ministries clusters used to sit through hours of council meetings

on topics that were not very relevant to them. Now that they have a Ministries Council, the meetings are more relevant.

Wickham asked if the Finance Committee needs to work on a 2020 budget, and it requires a large change, why would it come to Church Council instead of Administrative Council? Chair Orth said that the Administrative Council's role is more for the month-to-month business. When it becomes a longer-term topic, Administrative Council can ask the Church Council to look at it. In this case, Finance Committee asked the Church Council to help. Doolittle (Chair of Administrative Council) said that ideally, the budget might have been taken care of at the Administrative Council level, but the 2020 budget is a larger topic than the Administrative Council.

Allen said that one of the ideas the Future Church Team had for the Church Council was that it might pull in people with more specialized knowledge, and who are more familiar with the day-to-day and the month-to-month operations. Wickham said that in a reorganization, you need input from the people who are familiar with the day-to-day operations to help create a list of the must-haves and nice-to-have items and help prioritize them. Chair Orth said he thought the role of Church Council was to provide ideas to the other church councils and committees, not to dictate their actions.

Pastor Williams said that he thinks of this time as a growing period for the church. He still thinks of the Church Council as a governing body, but it has given Finance Committee control of the day-to-day, and it is not looking over their shoulder. Kennedy said that for example, the *Book of Discipline* only has a provision that a church council should approve the budget, but it does not say anything about monthly reports.

Kennedy wanted to clarify one more thing related to church councils, charge conferences, and church conferences. He said that a charge conference can become a church conference, and then all church members who attend may vote. Kennedy said that this congregation has always converted the charge conference into a church conference. He said that historically, he thought only 8–10 members attended the annual charge conferences. Doolittle said he thought there were more at the last charge conference because there was a presentation about the new church structure.

How will the Church Council communicate our work to the congregation?

Chair Orth said he and Kennedy checked and there was no requirement that Church Council meetings needed to be open. He said that in the Future Church Team meetings, there had been some heated discussions and there was an understanding that everyone was in this together that held the group together through the disagreements. He was unsure if he would speak as openly if there was an audience that did not have the context from attending all of the previous meetings and that shared understanding.

Kennedy said that the church had Jim Shirbroun and Scott Grotewold as pastors for a number of years. It can be a stressor for a congregation when pastors change. In the last few years, Scott Grotewold retired, and was replaced by Kay Hooper who retired due to health concerns after just over a year. Kay was replaced by Jill Sanders and then Jim Shirbourn was moved to Sioux City,

Grace, and was replaced by Jen Hibben. Chair Orth agreed that things are going to continue to change with the actions of the General Conference.

Chair Orth asked the other members for their opinions about open or closed Church Council meetings. Doolittle said he preferred open meetings, because he did not want to give the false impression that decisions were being made in a smoke-filled room. He said that in Spiritual Formations class, they have deeply-personal conversations too and there is an agreement, not of confidentiality, but of keeping things within context. He suggested there could be some kind of reminder at the start of the meetings to that effect.

Wickham agreed that openness is important because connection is one of the church's priorities and there are a lot of big issues to discuss. Allen also preferred open meetings. She said there might be times when someone walks into the middle of a conversation, and they may need to recognize that the council will move forward and not stop to catch them up.

Kennedy said in the 30 years he has attended Collegiate Wesley, council meetings have always been open. He said one of the things he tried to do as a previous chair of Church Council was to get agendas out early enough that they could go to the whole congregation. He said that does get to be a real burden if someone comes to listen or talk to a specific topic, and then the council does not get to that topic during that meeting.

Jodi Risdal said she would lean toward the open meetings as well. She said it would be important to make it clear who had the final agency in decision making. She asked what the role of people attending the meeting would be. Doolittle suggested it might be like a school board meeting where there was a time for for comments on a particular subject, then the conversation comes back to the board members. He suggested that non-members could participate, but they should not be able to take the floor.

Pastor Steve said he was in favor of open meetings, and suggested making the the minutes available to the congregation. He suggested that open meetings need some sort of ground rules about how to get on the agenda. He said that the council is a group of volunteers and should not have to put up with a group of people that try to monopolize the conversation during the meeting. He suggested that Roberts Rules of Order might have guidelines for open meetings.

Ryan Risdal also said he also preferred open meetings. He said that the church members need to trust each other, and know that if there are disagreements, members will be honest with each other. He said there was a tremendous opportunity for leadership within the council to help the church move forward.

Janssen said he appreciated the intimacy of a closed session for decision making. He said he was concerned that an open meeting might extend the conversation and result in the council needing to make the same decision.

Pastor Hibben said that congregation might need transparency right now over efficiency. She also said the council should establish ground rules. She suggested the council could keep the

option for a closed session, and a clear time for people to talk about the topics they attended the meeting to discuss.

Faeth said he was also in favor of open meetings. He said that the subcommittee meetings might be the place to hash out suggestions to bring to the whole council.

Chair Orth said it seemed like the consensus was for open meetings. Chair Orth asked if Church Council were to have open meetings, would it feel comfortable with closing a meeting in the heat of the moment, or would it need to be announced ahead of time?

Janssen suggested that ideally, the council would announce a closed session ahead of time, but reserve the right to close the meeting.

Kennedy said that the council should clarify that open meetings are not church conference meetings. Only the council members would have a vote at Church Council meetings.

Allen asked if quarterly meetings were appropriate given all that is going on within the church.

Chair Orth asked for suggestions about how to handle input from non-council members during the meetings. Faeth said that there was a time for public comment at the beginning of city council meetings. Allen suggested that it might be a good idea to open up discussions after the council started talking about a topic. Ryan Risdal suggested that the chair might try to determine why congregation members are attending a meeting in order to plan time for congregational comments. Pastor Hibben suggested introductions at the beginning of the meeting might help to both welcome the congregation members and find out what topic they might want to talk about. Allen said that this group is a new entity in a new structure, and there might be people who attend just to learn what the council is.

Kennedy said that he could not remember a time when there was a member of the congregation who took up a lot of time during a council meeting. Chair Orth said there was a lot of discussion at the last Administrative Council meeting. Pastor Williams said he did not interpret the influx of people attending the Administrative Council meeting in a negative way, to him that was a sign of a healthy church because they care about Pastor Sanders and they care about the church.

Ryan Risdal said it is the council's example that will help with healing. Allen suggested some kind of community building for the Church Council because not all of the members have worked together before.

How will the Church Council communicate our work to the congregation?

Chair Orth said that one way the Church Council will communicate is through open meetings. Chair Orth asked Pastor Hibben about the status of the area of the church website that was only visible to church members. Pastor Hibben said that the church still needs to ask the website contractors to turn it on. She said the Planning Center Groups were also created for the church clusters and committees. These sites would have a place to attach documents, and the idea was that the meeting minutes would go there, and then could be exported to the website for the church members.

Kennedy said that when the church formed the new structure, there was a provision that said there would be minutes taken, the minutes would be sent to the office, and then disseminated to the congregation on the website. Pastor Hibben said she would add an item to the staff meeting to bring up the website topic.

Chair Orth suggested that he and Faeth would form a subcommittee with any others interested to pilot the process with the Church Council. He suggested that after the minutes are sent out to the council, there would be five days for corrections, and then the minutes would be posted.

A motion was made (Doolittle) and seconded (Ryan Risdal) to establish a process for sharing minutes from the church council. After the secretary sends the minutes out to the Church Council, the members have five days to suggest any corrections. After the five days, the council will approve the minutes electronically, with any non-response counting as an approval. The approved minutes would then be shared with the church by posting them on the Church Council page of the CUMC-WF website. Motion carried.

Discussion of Church Council Priorities

Allen suggested she could facilitate a prioritization discussion at a later meeting for the topics brainstormed at the previous council meeting. Wickham asked if the council had enough capacity to look at more than the budget and general conference actions. Kennedy agreed. Allen said she thought it was important that the council have a group looking at the actions of the general conference. Chair Orth suggested that Allen might lead a session for the congregation. Allen clarified she had a specific prioritization activity in mind that would be a better fit for the council.

Doolittle said there was a meeting where the Future Church Team presented a proposal, and the congregation provided feedback. He said it was frustrating at the time for the Future Church Team, but very productive for the congregation. Kennedy said that the Future Church Team learned a lot at that meeting. Allen said there was better buy-in after that session.

Chair Orth asked for a volunteer to lead a subcommittee to look at general conference actions. Doolittle said he would be interested in discussing the topic, but he would be more interested in assisting. Pastor Williams suggested Doolittle might get help starting with the people who were in Saint Louis for the General Conference. Chair Orth suggested waiting until after the judicial council meets because that could influence the direction of discussions. Doolittle agreed to lead a subcommittee to look at the general conference actions.

Chair Orth volunteered to lead the subcommittee to start creating a 2020 budget. Church Council members who are interested in assisting with this task should let Chair Orth know.

Pastor Hibben provided the closing prayer.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m..

Respectfully Submitted,

Adam Faeth, Secretary