**CUMC/WESLEY FOUNDATION**

**CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES**

**May 25, 2019**

**Minutes of Meeting**

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

**Members Absent:** Brenda Allen, Doug Bates, Jill Sanders, Mary Wickham

**Staff Present:** Lindsay Drake

**Call to Order**

Chair Orth called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. and Pastor Williams provided the opening prayer. Chair Orth said that he invited Lindsay Drake to attend the council meeting because she has spent a lot of time reading *The Book of Discipline*.

Chair Orth said that at a staff meeting two weeks ago, the staff discussed how there were people in the congregation who feel like CUMC/WF is not moving forward since the passage of the Traditional Plan at the 2018 General Conference. He said that Doolittle conducted listening sessions a few weeks ago. At the staff meeting, Pastor Hibben suggested the church draft a statement of non-compliance. Orth said that the statement does not contain anything new; it was drawn from the statement of reconciliation written in 2000. Orth suggested that Church Council could come up with a statement and bring it to a Church Conference for everyone to vote on.

Chair Orth said that church conferences have to be publicized ahead of time, and there is a very narrow window of time before the Iowa Annual Conference. Therefore, he and the staff decided to advertise the church conference before Church Council had a chance to meet. He said that if Church Council decided against the church conference, it would be cancelled. Chair Orth asked for any opinions against holding the church council tomorrow.

Kennedy said he supported the statement of non-compliance and asked what the church would do with it after voting on it. Pastor Williams said he thought it was important for the church to raise our flag. He said the statement would be posted on the website, and it will be evident to people where Collegiate Wesley stands on this issue. He said the church will also send a letter to the conference to let them know where we stand. Pastor Hibben said she received requests to see a statement like this from other churches, because they want to pass something similar, but have not come up with their own statement yet. She said it also provides a way to show support for queer clergy.

The council was in favor of holding a church conference to vote on the statement of non-compliance.

Chair Orth said that the next step was to talk about the date of the church conference. He said that two Friday emails have gone out announcing the church conference. Pastor Hibben said she did receive one email questioning the holiday weekend date. She said she responded that there was not a long window of time between the Judicial Council rulings upholding much of the Traditional Plan and the Iowa Annual Conference.

Jodi Risdal asked if people need to be physically present, or if there can be an electronic vote. Pastor Hibben said there is no provision for an electronic vote, and that it would cut off discussion fostered by an in-person vote. Janssen suggested that the council not make any last-minute changes to the date advertised. Doolittle suggested the council move forward with the plan and send the statement out to the congregation in an email to review before tomorrow. Kennedy said that this this statement is largely the same as the Statement of Reconciliation. He said that one difference is that when the church passed the reconciling statement, the intent was to try to keep it within the bounds of the *Book of Discipline*. Kennedy said that he does think the statement of non-compliance is the right step for Collegiate Wesley to take at this time.

The consensus was to move forward with the church conference meeting on May 26, 2019.

The council discussed revisions to the draft statement provided. Kennedy suggested moving the whereas clause about the Statement of Reconciliation to the first clause. In the third paragraph, Doolittle suggested adding, “which is in conflict with our Reconciling Statement.”

Chair Orth asked about the wording of the financial and legal support in the sixth paragraph. Williams said the Traditional Plan is so punitive to take away the clergy’s livelihood and their credentials. Drake said the defendant’s costs when charges are brought are about $25,000 according to Anna Blaedel. Drake said it costs the conference another $75,000 to $100,000. She said that St. Marks UMC in Iowa City already set up a fund to help with costs of defending clergy from charges brought under the provisions of the Traditional Plan. Drake said that the conference might remove a pastor for a year without financial support. Kennedy suggested that the statement should be worded in a way that is less specific to avoid stumbling over this discussion at the church conference. Chair Orth said that he was concerned about the statement committing to legal support because that might bankrupt the church to try to save one person, and that was not likely something that the church would want. Pastor Hibben said the statement already said the church would provide “full support.”

Kennedy said that it was interesting that the statement reaffirmed our commitment to hold marriages, but not any part of the reconciling statement. Drake suggested adding the following to the first Therefore clause: “reaffirms our commitment to our Statement of Reconciliation and to be a fully inclusive church.”

Kennedy suggested changing the name to a Statement of Reaffirmation. Ryan Risdal suggested calling it a Statement of Reaffirmation of our Purpose. Pastor Hibben asked if she could call it a statement of non-compliance even if that was not the official name. Risdal said he thought it was important to tie the statement back to the church’s purpose. Doolittle suggested a new title, “Reaffirmation of Our Purpose and Statement of Reconciliation.”

Chair Orth called for a motion.

**A motion was made (Ryan Risdal) and seconded (Kennedy) to present this Reaffirmation of Our Purpose and Statement of Reconciliation to a church conference on May 26, 2019. Motion Passed.**

**Logistics of the Church Conference**

Chair Orth suggested that Pastor Williams run the church conference because the District Superintendent was not attending. He said he would like Kennedy to talk about the history (whereas clauses), and Pastor Hibben to talk about why this statement is important. After the congregation has a chance to ask questions, the council will call for a vote. Pastor Williams said that the vote must be a paper ballot.

Pastor Williams said his 40th wedding anniversary with his wife was Monday. He asked for permission to put up a wedding banner during the conference that he and his wife created for their wedding as an expression of hope.

Pastor Hibben provided the closing prayer.

The meeting adjourned at 10:13 a.m..

Respectfully Submitted,

Adam Faeth, Secretary