

**St. Michael Lutheran Church  
Congregation Council  
Minutes  
May 17, 2009**

**Present:** Linda Harriz, Robert Miles, Nancy Adair, Bill Henry, Wilson Worley, Sally Sizemore, Greg Monn, Sally Taylor, Peter Strub, Dave Cook, Steve Baker, Elise Stringer, Miki Wolff, Blake Castor, Ruth Howard, Dave Cook

**Absent:** Sue Clarke

**Guest:** Bill Carnes

**Packets distributed included:** Agenda, Financial Statements, Finance Recommendation

**Open Meeting:** Meeting opened at 1:15 with prayer by Pastor Robert, reflecting on the day's scripture on loving one another.

**Approval of Minutes from April meeting:** Steve Baker motion to approve, second Sally Sizemore; minutes from April 19, 2009 meeting approved by acclamation.

### **LIAISON/TEAM PROGRESS REPORTS**

**Finance** (Miki Wolff) – Finance report included in handout, which notes \$22,000 pledges resulting from the Bridging the Gap letter – update later on pledges received today. Recommendation from Finance is that Council follow revised spending plan of \$401, taking great care not to extend it and **allow** the use of the reserve fund (\$50K) to make up the difference between income and expenditures, with the understanding that the 2010 spending plan proposed to the congregation be no more than pledges plus 75% of the remaining reserve fund. Council voted to accept the \$401K revised Spending Plan at the April meeting, so no vote is necessary on this now. Wilson notes that we recognize that we are in concert to not spend any more than \$401K. Steve asks for clarification of the \$50K reserve fund – this \$50K is what remains in CD reserves after \$16K was used in 2008. Miki states that the Finance Team further notes that we have 2 CDs which come due in May and June (\$21K and \$10K), and recommends that these not be rolled over, but instead cashed out and put into our Greenville First Money Market account (our checking account). Dave Cook arrives. Motion not to roll over the CDs but instead cash them out and add to funds in our checking account: Nancy Adair, second: Steve Baker. Approved by acclamation.

Miki notes that the Columbarium Committee had their books audited by Howard Martinie and Frank Tucker. The books were found to be in accordance with good accounting principles, and correctly state the financial condition of the account. (Letter submitted to Secretary for the record)

**Learning** (Steve Baker) – Steve reported that the Learning Team is gearing up for fun summer Sunday school – learning in a group different things as outlined in the bulletin insert today. We are trying to grow both youth and adult programs. The Council is surveyed to determine involvement of Council members in learning at St. Michael. Plans for our fall Rally Day are underway. Pastor Robert notes that he likes the plan for summer – gives us a chance to practice again the whole notion that it is the job of parents to teach children. If we expect this, then we need to teach the parents. There has been in the last century a drastic cultural change in American religious life to where people expect the church to teach their children. The church's job is to teach and equip parents to be the teachers for their children. This summer plan give us a chance to demonstrate that.

**Program Development** (Ruth Howard) – Meeting today, no one came. Open to ideas and suggestions. Ruth has now tried twice to build a team, with no response from the congregation. Wilson suggests that Ruth have one person from every team come together with suggestions. This team is here to determine what the congregation wants. Wilson asked in general, are we hearing that there are programs we want? Pastor Elise notes that two have come recently to her and Pastor Robert with ideas: "I want to see this type of group and I am willing to make it happen." Peter wonders about putting a survey in the bulletin. Pastor Elise suggests that some brainstorming be done to identify specific people and talents to be directly contacted to work together on this. Miki suggests that Ruth contact Stacy Monteith who was involved in a MOPS (Mothers of Pre-Schoolers) program at another church in Michigan when. Pastor Robert notes that he see Ruth's job as moderator of the congregation's conversation about developing programs, not the one who makes everything happen. In answer to the needs/requests for programming question, Pastor Robert looks at people who are connected and people who are not. If they are not connected, then it is our job to get them connected. The great fallacy of church is that everyone thinks their group fits everyone's needs and that everyone should be part of their group. Everyone needs to experience meaning, purpose and belonging. This happens by being connected to a small group. If they are not connected, they will go out the back door. Peter challenges the Council – who do you know that is not connected? What will it take to get them connected? Existing program? New program? Direct invitation? Pastor Elise state that relationship matters – not a group or program, but relationship with the people involved in the group or program. Relationship with others will bring someone back sooner than a new or existing program to be involved in.

**Property** (Sue Clarke - *absent*) – Peter noted that team met this morning. A big item still being worked on is the lighting in the sanctuary. Sally notes that she did ask the fire department, but they do not wish to take on liability. There is a desire to completely change out these light cans to others which can be changed from the ground, however, this is a costly option.

The moldy and paint-flaking eave outside of the Gathering Area will be resolved sometime this summer when the weather is drier. Our property is looking great, best grass around! Peter gives credit to the Harriz family for upgrade to back of office and Mellom house – new grass there is filling and looking very nice. Pastor Robert and Bill Henry both note that they have received comments and compliments from individuals regarding our improvements to the physical campus.

**JUST IN!** 22 Bridging the Gap pledges for \$28,500 total.

**Social Ministry** (Bill Henry) – has not met since last Council meeting, but did work their way through Operation Inasamuch. Bill gives great credit to Pastor Elise for her hard work and dedication to this project. St. Michael had 116 participants and there were over 300 participants among the Lutheran churches participating in the Greenville area. This is an amazing witness to serving Christ in the World. Bill applied for Thrivent funds (\$500) to support the Hospice Comfort Bags program. Thanks to all for support and prayers. Next meeting is May 31.

**Stewardship** (Greg Monn) – Pledge update noted above. The team did not meet in May, but half of the team were present at Finance team meeting last week. Stewardship plans another letter which says thanks if you gave, and please consider if you did not, as well as other communications through the year. Next meeting will be June 3. Pledge updates will be sent as available. Many compliments were received on the Bridging the Gap letter.

**Worship & Music** (Sally Sizemore) – Team met on May 11.

- The new flower urns are now in placed and engraved.
- Bessie Foster's memorial funds may be used to purchase new white paraments.
- Joint choral program this afternoon at Springfield Baptist Church.
- Choir will take summer hiatus after Pentecost.

Ushers: Greg asks if ushers rotate, noting that when he was growing up in the church, ushering was a kind of transition stage of church service: Mid-range between acolyte and crucifer – usher – assisting minister or lector. Ushers at St. Michael are historically resistant to organization. Those who serve as ushers find it meaningful, which is why we need to invite and include others. It is a leadership task for our council to communicate to others that we need you to help and be connected. Again, it is the relationship that matters. We should not say "no" when someone is asking to help.

Steve talks about choir – has heard Charlie say that he doesn't think applause is appropriate in church – how can we show appreciation to Charlie and to choir at end of season? Sally responds: show up at today's program, and Good Friday, Maundy Thursday, and other events. Pastor Robert observes in Steve's question a sincere desire to show appreciation. This can be a conversation between Steve, Robert and Sally.

Worship and Music team will not meet again until end of summer.

**WOW** (Blake Castor & Sally Taylor) – brief meeting last Sunday, focusing on calling visitors (BB). Bryson Bailey is calling.

**Youth & Athletics** (Nancy Adair) – concession work at Greenville Drive – have not had a response back from Drive. Need to follow up – option for \$500/game. This team has not met since March.

- Very good Youth Sunday two weeks ago.
- Young Youth has events scheduled once a month through summer.
- In 9½ weeks 5 LCY members go to New Orleans. Pastor Robert asked about concrete tie-ins with congregation and youth this year as when they went to San Antonio three years ago. We will plan to do a sending service on the Sunday before they leave; Nancy is waiting for materials. Will there be internet connection capability? Possibly – this gathering is different from past gatherings, time is more structure, with less free time as a group. A meeting with Gathering parents is scheduled for this Thursday.
- Jeffrey is looking into church volleyball league.

## New Business –

**Synod Assembly Discussion.** Bill Carnes was present at the Council meeting seeking understanding regarding the upcoming (May 28-30, 2009, Newberry College) Synod Assembly's agenda item regarding the ELCA's proposed social statement, "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust." This is regarded as an important issue. (The statement is available for download at [www.elca.org/faithfuljourney](http://www.elca.org/faithfuljourney).) Is St. Michael sending delegates? Do the delegates vote their conscience, or is there conversation within St. Michael and then delegates vote on behalf of St. Michael, as the congregation votes or decrees?

Peter provided the group with a handout which included Page 10 of the April, 2009 issue of The Lutheran magazine, containing two informational articles, and Pages 2-4 of the May-June 2009 issue of the SC Lutheran magazine containing a letter from SC Bishop Herman Yoos, all of which pertain to the topic of this social statement. Howard Leonard brought this to this morning's Lutheran Men in Mission meeting. The voting on the issues is a 4-step process, only proceeding to the next step if previous step is approved. There is only one Sunday left to bring this before congregation, and insufficient time to do so according to St. Michael's constitution.

Pastor Robert responds, making these four points:

- St. Michael's congregation historically has not been connected to the Church at the synod level. Only 14 families subscribe to the SC Lutheran, only 2 subscribe to The Lutheran. We have in the last 15 years seldom sent delegates to the SC Synod Assembly. It is the Council's responsibility to appoint delegates. Have to be involved in other issues as well as this one.
- Process: The task force has recommended to the ELCA a statement on human sexuality. Only the Churchwide Assembly can act on behalf of the Church. All synod assemblies are now meeting. In all likelihood, a resolution will come from the SC Synod. As a registered delegate you can vote on a resolution (called a "memorial"). This is cumbersome, but it is the only way of doing business when working with this number of people. Anyone can write letter to the assembly or to the delegates to the Churchwide Assembly, to express thoughts or feelings on any issue.
- The Lutheran church has long history of issuing social statements. When 3 branches of the Lutheran church joined together in 1988 to form the ELCA, all previous social statements disappeared. So for the last 22 years, we as the Church have been starting over. One of the basic purposes of any social statement in the ELCA is to be a teaching document, giving a starting place when the issue becomes a name and face standing before you. This particular issue of great import.
- The process of developing this particular social statement has been going on for 7 years. Pastor Robert referenced a pastor friend who offered an adult education forum on this topic, which resulted in division in his congregation. Historically, no one comes for adult education forums, so Pastor Robert did not offer one; perhaps failing the congregation.

Pastor Robert continues, stating that he has strong feelings and positions on this statement, and acknowledges that it is not a black and white issue. He is happy to discuss the statement with anybody who reads the full statement. The statement was made available to clergy one day before it was released to the press (February 19, 2009, one week before Ash Wednesday and the start of the Lenten season).

Other discussion:

Do pastors vote? Yes. Every congregation is entitled to voting delegates according to its Baptized membership. St. Michael is entitled to 3 voting delegates, plus every congregation is entitled to one voting delegate under the age of 30. Jeffrey Stringer asked to go. Rachel Harriz has agreed to go as our under 30 delegate. Bub McConnell has been asked and has agreed to go. We are entitled to one more delegate which should be a female over the age of 30. Council can approve these delegates or disapprove and recommend others. (The Constitution of the South Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America states in Chapter 7 regarding Synod Assembly: "The Synod Council shall seek to ensure that, as nearly as possible, 50% of the lay members of the assembly shall be female and 50% shall be male. Additional members from each congregation normally shall be equally divided between male and female.")

Addressing the earlier question, "will delegates vote on their own conscience or vote the voice of the congregation?" Pastor Robert notes that the constitution (as he recalls) does not address this question. He assures Council there is not unanimity of opinion on this matter within the congregation. He notes that, were he a lay person and appointed by Council to be a voting member of assembly, he would not want to be told how to vote. Adult Christians of mature faith should be able to vote their conscience. As noted earlier, there is not time to call a congregational meeting for discussion and vote in accordance with St. Michael's Constitution, and doing so is not recommended. Council can, however, act on its own to send a message to our voting members of the Churchwide Assembly.

Pastor Elise counsels that all who are voting will have read the social statement in preparation for Assembly. She asks that Council members be in prayer for those who have worked on this statement and those who will be voting, from our congregation, our state and churchwide. Dr. Dan Bell, Professor of Ethics from LTSS, will be leading this discussion on this statement. Anyone can attend as a visitor and listen to his discussion and the discussion of the Assembly.

Pastor Robert notes there is an active and organized opposition movement – “Word Alone” – which seeks to divide the ELCA, and says it is Council’s responsibility to make certain we do not divide our congregation.

Wilson, acknowledging that there is no time for congregation meeting, states that Council could meet for 3 days and not come to conclusion or agreement on this subject, and recommends that the delegates vote their conscience and report back to the congregation.

Pastor Robert asks forgiveness if the Council and congregation is of the opinion that he should have forced congregation to meet and discuss this social statement. Bill Henry states that his former congregation (University Lutheran, Clemson) was forced to meet and discuss, resulting in division, lost members and lost pledges.

Pastor Robert notes that this issue cant take vital energy from the mission of the Church, and our congregation. He asks Council to be aware of how deeply he struggles with this issue (as he struggled deeply with the ELCA’s agreements wit the Episcopal Church) and notes that the outcome of this Churchwide Assembly may well force him to make some difficult decisions regarding his own ministry. This issue has split the Episcopal Church; he hopes our ELCA can avoid that. The Church does have a responsibility to speak to issues of justice in society.

Bill Carnes thanks Council their time and notes his appreciation of Bill Henry’s comments regarding the experience in at University Lutheran in Clemson.

Steve moves at 3:05 pm that our choir members be permitted to go to prepare for their afternoon festival, however, Sally & Sally note that they are not due in the choir room until 3:30 pm.

Peter brings back to the table the currently proposed delegates to the SC Synod Assembly, May 28-30: Jeffrey Stringer, Bub McConnell and Rachel Harriz (under 30 years of age) for Council action. **Motion to approve representation as it stands: Wilson Worley; second: Sally Sizemore. Discussion: We should go ahead and fill the fourth delegate slot with a female at our discretion. Approved by acclamation.**

**Energy Assessment** was skipped for time constraints

**Treasurer’s Report** (Dave Cook) – April financial statements are included in the packet; normal month. Dave notes that he shared with the Finance team last week that we came through the first two weeks of May ahead financially even though we paid our quarterly insurance premium and a maintenance contract on office equipment. Reviewing the financial statements, Greg Monn observes that our position at 1/3 of the year is good and on track. There are no questions or other comments regarding the Financial reports. Peter asks Dave about the property tax notice we have received on the Mellom house. Dave has looked into this and notes that we need to change our status with the tax office from J-1 to J-5. He has everything necessary to process this change and will send to Columbia this week.

### **Calendar items**

- Memorial Day – Church Office Closed – May 25
- No K-12 Sunday School – May 24 & May 31
- Summer Sunday School Kick-Off – June 7
- Vacation Bible School – June 22-26
- Isle of Palms Beach Retreat – July 5-12
- LCY National Youth Gathering – July 22-26
- Confirmation Camp – August 2-8

**Information Item:** Peter announces an anonymous gift of property at the beach. The Council chairs and Finance Team have researched St. Michael’s Constitution, learning that acceptance of this gift will require a congregational vote. The paperwork is in process. Discussion continues regarding the disposition of the property once it is gifted to St. Michael. Nancy asks how St. Michael plans to pay the property taxes on this property. Agreement is that donor will handle that.

**Next meeting, June 28, 1:15 pm**

Meeting adjourned 3:15 pm, with prayer by Pastor Elise.

Respectfully submitted  
Linda Harriz  
Council Secretary