



GUM CHURCH

Our vision is to actively live the example of Jesus

Governance Board Meeting Minutes Saturday, May 9, 2020

This meeting was held via Zoom online. In attendance were:

*Pastor Sherri Swanson, Kyle Anderson, Michael Freude, Christine Webster, Jeri Bigler, John Johnson, Amy Schuiling, Dan DeZwaan, Sue Kremkow, *Carol DeWeerd, and Craig Brodie (on the phone). *non-voting members

Amy Schuiling called the meeting to order at 9:10 am. Amy shared a devotional entitled “My circumstances are not the architect of my life” with the group. Condolences were given to Sue Kremkow on the passing of her father. Our prayers are with her and her family during this difficult time.

COMMITTEE/STAFF REPORTS:

OFFICE MANAGER - Amy Schuiling

We are continuing to work remotely from home as best we can, and continue to check in on some of our church members. I have been making brief visits to our offices every couple of days to sort and process mail, check the building and doors, and gather things I need to work from home. Our weekly staff meetings are continuing virtually, so we are able to stay connected and share our thoughts and ideas. We have been discussing possible options of return and all things that need to be considered. This will be the subject for weeks and months to come for our staff and also several committees of the church since there are so many things to consider.

YOUNG DISCIPLES - Sara Zallar

Even though we are apart, Young Disciples have been spending much time together! We continue to have weekly Sunday School classes: first through a YouTube recorded lesson and the past 6 weeks on Zoom. We have two classes: one for children 3 years-2nd grade and one for 2nd-6th grades (parents choose one or both). We have also offered story time Zooms with 4 guest readers, giving children and other adults in the church a chance to connect, read together and play.

EDGE: (4th-6th grades) and Youth (7th-12th grades) continue to connect weekly as well. Youth meet on Tuesdays for a more focused time of discussion including sessions on worry, disappointment, and mindfulness. Both groups meet on Fridays for “Fun Friday”. We have had virtual cupcake wars, trivia days, fancy lunch parties and more! We have even had a few college graduates return with us - what joy!

Weekly updates continue to go out in our newsletters including resources to talk with children about COVID-19 and UMC Michigan conference at-home children’s education resources.

As we have been discussing ways we can share, be kind, and show love like Jesus (especially in quarantine). Children in Sunday School were sent blank postcards so that they may spread some sunshine out into our church community through the mail. We hope to continue extending ways to connect while we are staying safe as a community - the kids really get it!

ADULT CHOIR - Lynette Cole

Choir is meeting weekly on Zoom to check in, be aware of any prayer concerns, share joys and stories, and just see each other's faces. It's always been a close small group/support so it's good to lift each other up. I've been happy that many of our newer members are regular attendees and we also have had our snowbirds join in! "I have had only a tiny part in the worship services, and applaud Alex for his tremendous work."

COMMUNICATION/HOSPITALITY - Heather Blaszczyk

Things have certainly been unusual since COVID-19. As a staff we have brainstormed together and gotten very creative with the way we do things. In regards to communications I have been trying to keep the congregation informed and connected in various ways. We went from doing a monthly newsletter to something weekly because things are progressing and changing so rapidly. I have also tried to keep congregants engaged on our Facebook page. Many are only seeing their families each day, or may even live alone, so it is nice to connect, even if it is through social media. I have also been diligent about updating the electronic sign with dates while we are closed, Community Cupboard and Food Truck distribution. These important food ministries have also been posted on the website and social media to make sure we are extending our outreach as much as possible during this vulnerable time.

FINANCE - reported by Pastor Sherri and Amy

Generally, the church is doing well. Some members have paid their pledges in advance and more people are contributing online.

- A. Ministry shares - The committee voted to pay the ministry shares for April.
- B. PPP/Care Loan - We received the PPP/Care Loan from the federal government which will cover 8 weeks of payroll and related expenses. We have to show what the money was used for. A separate account has been set up to track these costs.
- C. Annual Conference - by having this virtually we will save on expenditures related to our attending.
- D. Utilities - not used a much so we are saving money
- E. approx. \$3000 was collected from the 2019 and 2020 special Easter offerings, which may be used for technology expenses needed for live streaming of our worship services.
- F. "Give Plus" app will be introduced to members to sign up for contributing (conference suggests 3 methods of giving)

SPRC -

This committee has re-worked the staff evaluation forms due to contributions of new committee members. The new forms utilize a numerical rating system.

MISSIONS -

Feeding America - has donated one Hand-to-Hand and one food truck delivery. We have also been receiving monetary donations for our food programs from various members, constituents and even anonymous donors.

115 families were served at the Food Truck distribution on May 8.

INT. FAITH DEVEL - Kay DeMoss

This committee is looking into having virtual classes.

LIAISON REPORTS:

Prayer group - Jeri

- A. Pat Oldfield is having difficulty knowing when people have prayer needs; less prayer requests- need more publicity to remind people that there is a special group who will be their Prayer Warriors
- B. Present system - on Thursday mornings the prayer group meets and comes to Sherri to pick up prayer requests; no next step cards now
- C. Suggestions to try - ask Heather to put Pat's group in weekly updates; on website; and/or during the after worship announcements

Open Door - Kyle

Received communication with RMN (Reconciling Ministries Network) that we should pursue affiliation.

This committee has new chairpersons: Hillary Kitchin and Andy Meredith.

Church and Society - Christine Webster

Meeting this summer to plan fall programming

They continue in support of the Open Door committee

At this point Craig shared a devotion with us about "operating in the darkness".

PASTOR'S REPORT:

A. What a strange and challenging time we are living in! For the first month of this shutdown (until Easter), I felt like I could hardly keep up. Conditions were changing so rapidly and there was a steep learning curve as I tried to learn how to do new things. Now, in the past month, it seems like time has almost completely stopped. There are none of the usual markers and it is somewhat disorienting.

I was really glad that the Governance Board, as well as SPRC and our staff, had all discussed COVID-19 at least a bit in early March before it became a true emergency for us. Still, in those first couple of weeks, we were literally adapting our plans daily – even hourly.

Our staff has been coping well with these evolving conditions. Some staff members have a lot to do. Other staff members are trying to find helpful things to do, though the workload is certainly reduced. And some staff members have nothing to do for the church at this time. Yet, we continue to meet virtually each week for support and sharing ideas.

Based on the latest information from our Governor and our Bishop, we are planning to keep the building closed throughout the rest of this month. We are reading and learning as much as we can about what needs to happen when we reopen. It will probably happen in stages, with just staff coming in initially, and then live streaming in the sanctuary with a small group. It may still be quite a while before we can host a larger congregation.

I hope you have been worshiping along with us on Sundays. If so, I'm sure you will agree that our staff has been doing an excellent job. Alex, in particular, has worked magic with music and editing. Ryan's technical expertise has been a tremendous help. Sara has been so creative about preparing children's sermons. Heather has tried to keep the congregation informed about what's happening. I'm very grateful to all of them.

Since online worship is here to stay, I have asked our Finance Committee to consider investing some money in audiovisual equipment. We will continue to pursue how to offer the best worship service possible for people to experience in their homes. I am aware that at least 20 persons in the congregation have not been able to participate in our worship services over these past two months due to their lack of internet access. Once we again go "live," I'm told there is a way they can call in to hear over a simple phone line.

Over the past six weeks, I've made a little more than 150 phone calls to 85 families in our congregation (so several of these have been repeat calls to the same persons). Mostly I've focused on older members and those who have been ill, have had recent surgeries, have lost loved ones, or have had some other need. Some of these conversations are rather brief; some have even just been leaving voice messages when I don't reach an actual person. Yet, many are quite lengthy (15, 20, even 30 minutes). I do find people are lonely, hungry for social contact, and eager to chat.

I would appreciate some help with this. When the stay-at-home order first went into effect, I reached out to the Stephen Ministers. One person said she would contact the individuals in her circle of friends. Another said she would send notes in the mail. Still, we need a broader reach and more coordinated effort.

With approximately 260 families in the congregation, obviously I am not able to communicate personally with all of them. I wish we had been able to pursue the hiring of a Congregational Care Coordinator (seminary student or retired pastor) as we considered doing last year and then postponed. I did speak with the staff this past week and some of them agreed to reach out to the volunteers in their program areas (Sunday School teachers, youth parents, nursery workers, choir members, etc.). It would also be wonderful if Governance Board members could follow up with your liaisons to various groups.

Our administrative committees are continuing to function. Finance has met twice. Staff-Parish Relations has met twice, with another meeting planned next week. Missions and Trustees have not met as a full committee, but I have kept in close contact with the chairpersons and they are continuing to do important work. Our Food Pantry and Food Trucks have served many in this time of need.

We were approved for our loan with the Small Business Administration to cover two months of payroll expenses and expect to receive the money next week. That is very good news, though we are actually holding our own pretty well financially – since most of our members have continued giving faithfully and our expenses are down.

I have participated in seven webinars offered by the Conference (each about an hour long) on these topics: Tech Questions, Online Funerals, Shelter in Place for the Church, Online Worship, Holy Week Planning, The "Why" and "How" of Financial Giving in this time, Pastoral Care at a Distance, and Online Streaming. Some have been more useful than others, but I've discovered at least a nugget or two of helpful information in each. These are free, available to anyone, and

saved for later viewing. You will find them here: <https://michiganumc.org/health-crisis-toolbox/>. I have also signed up for a webinar through Church of the Resurrection next Wednesday about Re-Opening Considerations.

I've met twice with my Momentum cohort of other pastors in the Conference. It has been helpful to share experiences and bounce ideas off some very capable clergy colleagues.

Annual Conference (originally scheduled for late May) has been postponed until late July and will now be held virtually. General Conference (originally scheduled for right now) and Jurisdictional Conference (originally scheduled for mid-July) have been postponed until the fall of 2021. This means I will continue serving on our Michigan delegation for another year. We have been meeting monthly, though we are planning to meet less frequently for the next several months. We don't yet know if new legislation will be allowed. There is a lot up in the air about the potential split in our denomination and some people wonder if the protocol negotiated by various groups earlier in the year will hold.

The New Member Class I had planned for this month was postponed. I am still hoping to hold it later in the summer – either in-person or virtually. I also have three baptisms that are on hold, and also a couple of weddings which may be postponed (those are not at GUM, but family friends).

My husband and I are both doing okay. Our concerns focus on our children, our parents, his brother (who is dying), and the wellbeing of our congregations – both the individuals within and the viability of the whole body in the days ahead. If I can be of help to you in any way, please let me know.

B. During this meeting Pastor Sherri reiterated some points:

- online worship will continue even when we resume meeting in the church
- congregational care: it would be ideal to have a long-term strategy - a designated person to help with congregational care; many phone calls have been made to older members, those in need
- very happy with the fact that we received the PPP grant
- Pastor Sherri has kept informed with many Webinars and meeting with fellow pastors
- RE: 20+ who are not getting the worship service because of lack of skill, or connection, or not having a device. Discussion:
 - provide tablets for seniors?
 - borrow unused tablets from the schools (security issues?)
 - some seniors simply need coaching
 - we may need to provide a dedicated phone line to call in - this appears to be the easiest solution
 - *we should pursue this route to set up a designated phone line

RE-OPENING CONSIDERATIONS:

Pastor Sherri provided the committee with three documents to help understand what has to be considered to re-open: an informational sheet regarding "RE-opening Considerations"; A Plan to re-engage Michigan's Economy entitled MI SAFE START by a task force coordinated by Gov. Whitmer (www.michigan.gov); and, Principles and Directions for the Reopening of UMC facilities in Michigan from the Michigan UM Conference (www.MichiganUMC.org). Current guiding principles in the Bishop's report state that "for the safety of all of society, we will follow the

guidelines of the Governor of the State of Michigan with respect to shelter in place and public gatherings”.

DISCUSSION/Questions:

What’s the projection when church will come together again?

Live streaming would start first in coordination with continued online worship

We are presently at Stage 3; we might look to July/Aug. to be at Stage 5 (hopefully)

- In the Bishop’s guidelines it states that not only should we consider the data from the health experts and the stage Michigan is in, but also the **“risk factor” of the church**, ie percentage of attendees over 60, where we are located, cleaning needs, etc. Sherri related that we do have a good number of attendees over 60; and, a large group with young children - question of caring for these children. There are very few parishioners in the middle.

-**singing** presents a problem

-Live vs. Pre-recorded service??

- we have been doing an excellent job with the online services

- some members preferred the pre-recorded service

-can watch anytime

-whatever works best for the staff - it is very time consuming for Alex to coordinate all the musical parts

*Consensus of group: keep doing what’s being done

-we would like the church to know of and follow the guidelines set forth by the Governor and the Bishop”

-Less connection/follow up with who is watching the service

-we are expanding our reach to non-members with online services

-how do we connect with these people - no contact “next step” card

- need to work out how to find out who’s out there - Google?

-So when???

-we would like the church to know of and follow the guidelines set forth by the Gov. and the Bishop

- we have to watch, wait for guidance so we can open safely

-we are as concerned about opening as everyone is

VICE-CHAIR:

Dan DeZwaan has volunteered to fill this position. Thanks to Dan!

OTHER BUSINESS:

It was suggested that we meet in July to prepare for the re-opening.

Next meeting will be: **July 11, 2020 @ 9:00 am**

Craig closed with prayer.

In Christian love,

Carol DeWeerd

Governance Board Secretary