

SUM Church Council Minutes

2/4/2024

Attendees

Jen Acheson, Tim Boswell, Eileen Brogan, Lucille Burke, Ben Cerny, Campbell Cerny, Case Cerny, Jen Cerny, Deb Clifford, Gregory Freidline, Peter Gailey, Lori Catlin Garcia, Matthew Jamison, Hal Johnson, Rolene Johnson, Barry Kline, Glenn Knight, Alan Lahue, Leslie Lahue, Eric Lemke, Sue Homrok-Lemke, Sandy Lipscomb, Karen Matheson, Bill Meredith, John O'Neal, Gene Ott, Mike Sames, Sue Sames, Susan Samuel, John Thomson, Susan Thomson, Lynn Wadhams, John Wadhams, Elizabeth Webber, Ben Webber, Mattingly Webber, and Sidney Webber.

Welcome & Opening Prayer – Sue Homrok-Lemke

Meeting called to order at 11:56 am

- Thank you Sue and Mike Sames for all your work on this wonderful brunch

Joys & Celebrations

- Sue/Mike Sames: resettling a new immigrant family will begin soon
- Jen Acheson: Her mother's knee surgery went well
- Peter Gailey: VIM has returned safely from the FL mission trip. One of the homeowners requested baptism while VIM team was there.
- Sue/Mike Sames: We had to add tables/seats for this meeting.

Pastor Update – Pastor Gene

- Pastor Gene is consistently amazed by the leaders in our congregation: lay leaders, trustees, new leaders for church council, hospitality and finance. It's great! You make things happen in the church. Kudos to you!
- We continue to baptize and confirm new people in our church
- The General Conference is will be held May 2024 in Charlotte, NC
- Special shout out to the Lemke's and Steve Langin who have been working hard to get the roof repaired at the parsonage.

Deacon Update – Deacon Deb

- Deacon Deb would like to recognize Sue Homrok-Lemke as new Church Council leader
- Deacon Deb is accepting prayers for her right knee surgery this Wednesday
- Loving Your LGBTQA Neighbor
 - Attendees from last fall's events are gathering in a support group at Jeff and Jenny Euting's home.

- Continued opportunities to inspire, engage and enable our SUM community to replace anti-LGBTQ, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and racism with open-minded, welcoming, relational mindsets and experiences.
- Justice & Joy Updates
 - There was a large Days for Girls distribution to Kenya
 - Meeting mid-Feb to discern distribution of Holiday giving
 - Our next Meal Packing event is April 27th
 - New refugee family on the way
 - The Volunteers in Mission (VIM) trip to Fort Myers was completed; upcoming VIM brunch fundraiser is Sunday February 25th
 - We will expand our reach with disaster recovery by providing training and certification conference-wide. Next training is April at Newtown UMC
 - We have expanded number of people as Friendly Visitors
 - Caring for the Earth – invasive Lantern Fly education program by Debb Dunn will be happening
 - Food justice opportunities
 - Kenya project - Pastor Ken in Kenya provided updates on children we support in boarding school
- Adult Spiritual Growth Lenten Studies will start February 19th
- A reinvigorated Vacation Bible School
 - Registration push begins now.
 - Camp Firefight will be June 17-21, full days! 9am – 4pm
 - First Church Simsbury and Simsbury United Methodist are teaming up to host this Vacation Bible School "campout" for children grades K-5. Grades 6-8 are invited to serve as CITs (Counselors in Training), and high school students are invited to serve as Counselors. In addition, the appropriate number of adult volunteers and professional staff will be present at VBS.
- Youth Confirmation Class continues. It's a joy to engage with our youth!
- Growing Faith in Our Children program was snowed out several times.
- 5-6 new people will be learning how to run the audio/visual in the sacristy for Sunday worship.
- Encouraging collaboration among Welcoming, Hospitality, and Communications teams for effective cross-ministry efforts
- There will be a new way to make your offering using VANCO
- The Prayer Chain is vital. You can submit prayer requests via email to: prayers@sumct.org

Staff Parish Relations (SPR) – John Thomson

The goal of SPR at Simsbury United Methodist Church is to facilitate a process with the pastoral and lay leadership that enables the accomplishment of the stated purposes to our church and community. SUMC has prepared guidance through the preparation and adoption of our stated purpose (Purpose Statement). SPR embraces the call of **“leaders leading leaders”** in fulfilling SUM’s Purpose Statements.

- SCOPE and IMPACT of SPR at SUM:
 - SUM + LLI 2024 Compensated Headcount: 37
 - SUM + LLI Annual 2024 Compensation Estimate: \$1,150,000 (+3.0%)
 - 2024 SPR Committee: 9 voting members; 3 Ex officio SUM leaders

- SPR ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES:
 - **Continuing to Evolve and Developing Human Resource Processes and Practices**
 - Reflecting the stated purpose of SPR at SUM, its connection to the stated purpose of SUM and the UMC Book of Discipline, a “QUIET HR” process is being developed and implemented to facilitate the work of SUMC and maintaining compliance, delivery of our missions and commitments, supporting our clergy and lay leadership, and documentation of HR actions and processes.
 - This approach includes standardized forms, facilitation of processes such as performance reviews and compensation adjustments, onboarding of new employees, recruitment of new and replacement staff, etc.
 - **Human Resource Actions in 2024**
 - The process/practice of “**liaison**” roles of committee members continues, supporting key SUM staff. New SPR Committee Members have been recruited and new Liaison connections will be re-established.
 - The 2023 **performance review** process for all SUM staff, both clergy and compensated lay leaders has been completed (One Review Deferred into Q1 2024).
 - **2024 SUM/LLI Compensation Actions**
 - **SUM Clergy:** 2024 Compensation Adjustments implemented on 1/1/2024
 - **SUM Staff:** Compensation Adjustments will be made in March/April 2024
 - **LLI Staff:** Compensation Adjustments are contemplated for May 2024, in conjunction with the Annual Performance Review Process. (May is Teacher Recognition Month)
 - Additional financial resources will be required for SUM staff which will be included in the 2024 SUM budget process. For LLI, the staff compensation expenses are recovered via the tuition payments received from student families.
 - Work continues with SUM Finance and Stewardship to quantify compensation impacts and include in budgeting and stewardship processes.
 - **SPR Committee Changes**
 - New SPR Committee Members:
 - Timothy Boswell (2024)
 - Dorrie Denagy (2025)
 - Leigh Ann Esch (2025)
 - Glenn Knight (2024)
 - **SPR Incubation and Facilitation**
 - **SUM Youth Program** focusing of children in grades 6 – 12 has been developed and is being implemented in the Fall of the 2023-2024 SUM program year. Assessment needed in early 2024 to determine more permanent leadership
 - Reconstitution of the **LLI advisory committee**
 - Supporting SUM clergy and SUM finance and SUM church council in addressing the evolving needs of a rapidly evolving member and community environment.

- **Upcoming SPR Focus and Initiatives**

- Continue the evolution and implementation of “Quiet HR” processes and practices.
- Conducting the 2024 Annual Performance Review Process.
- Conduct a staff review for LLI.
- Develop and implement a process that supports the retaining, documentation, and compensation for those who provide services on limited duration and special projects.
- Position paper completed in January 2024 and is being rolled out. (See Addendum B)
- Implement the Safe Sanctuaries Programs.
- Implement Voluntary Employee Retirement Savings (Employee Contribution Only).
- Complete the required updates and the distribution of the SUM/LLI Employee Handbooks: Little Lambs and Ivy and SUM.
- SUM and LLI staffing support, as required.

Finance – Jen Acheson

- Firstly, thanks again to Clayton Cutler who led this team for over five years! And thanks to Clayton as well for continuing to serve on the committee. Jen has always enjoyed working with Clayton and looks forward to continuing to do so.
- Secondly, a huge thank you to Roanne LeClair, Laura Riley, and Steve Langin for completing an audit of SUM's books. This was a big undertaking, and Jen appreciates their persistence in getting it accomplished. A few areas were identified where we could improve our processes, but overall, everything was in order. Thanks to Laura and Roanne for their teamwork as bookkeeper and treasurer the past few years!
- Thirdly, thanks to Greg Freidline for heading our stewardship campaign for our 2024 budget. A few more calls need to be made to follow up with people we haven't heard from yet, but we currently stand at 88% of our targeted pledge amount. Thanks, Greg, for jumping in with both feet and being a numbers guy! We appreciate your data analysis and insights. And thanks to Greg's son, Asher, who also helped with some of our stewardship messaging in church.
- Now, on to business: we closed the books on our 2023 fiscal year in the red for the second year in a row.
- Our income, including LLI's contribution, fell short of our expenses by a combined amount over the past two years of approximately \$100,000. A big chunk of the shortfall was from 2022. Our reserves covered the gap.
- We are a church with resources, but not enough to continue to have shortfalls like the past two years. A few of us are getting together Monday night to review everything, but many expenses are beyond our control including utility costs, snow removal, etc. We can control salaries, but without our highly-functioning staff many of the programs, both inside the church and out in the community, would not be able to continue. We have *no* intention of pursuing that kind of cost-savings; we don't have an expense problem, we have an income problem. Even with LLI's contribution to our bottom line, we need to figure out more ways to boost our income.
- Jen is excited to work with the really strong finance team we have, but we'll need help from everyone. Please feel free to reach out to me with questions or if you want more details. If you feel you can help out by increasing your pledge, please email Stewardship@sumct.org or call Deb Reid in the office.
- New contribution payment system is live on website.
- Jen is looking forward to continuing to serve SUM in 2024.

Trustees – *John O’Neal for Gene Esch*

- Meetings – The trustees continue to hold their monthly meetings.
- Endowment Funds – The 1-1-2023 total was \$936,861. The 1/1/2024 total was \$992,119 for an increase of \$55,258 after expenditures throughout the year.
- Church Property Report – Church and Wesley Hall
 - Current Challenges
 - Had back-up in church sewer on Jan. 24th causing water to come into basement through women’s bathroom. Was caused by tree roots in sewer pipe. Will need to visit about repairs needed to keep from happening going forward.
 - Air ducts on ground floor and basement will need to be cleaned. Once completed ceiling tile around vents will need replaced.
 - Need to repair outside faucet located in LLI playground area. Valve does not shut off completely.
 - Resolved Items
 - Visit by Fire Marshal on Dec. 7th occurred. He cleared all the findings.
 - Terra Cotta Roof repairs on the church were completed on Jan. 2 2024
- Church Property Report – Annex
 - Current Challenges
 - Need to replace electrical circuit box in basement as it has corrosion building up on it. Will then need to make sure it is properly grounded to prevent from happening again.
 - Resolved Items
 - Aquarion Water replaced leaking water meter in basement Nov. 27th 2023
 - Painting is all completed on exterior of the Annex.
 - Gas Boiler replaced.
- Church Property Report – Parsonage
 - Current Challenges
 - Small rotted area in screened room needs to be fixed and tiles reset.
 - December 18th tree fell on eastern side of roof causing one large hole and several smaller holes. Water entered the parsonage and will need repaired also. Working with insurance and contractors to get resolved at this time.
 - Resolved Items
 - Multiple trees have been removed from around the back yard that were considered dangerous.
- Church Property Report – Office & Barn
 - Current Challenges
 - Office middle outside door needs to be resealed to prevent water from entering during rain storms.
 - Resolved Items
 - Propane tanks have been relocated away from Barn to meet code.

- Garage area has been opened up to issue with Fire Marshal in regards to access to fire exit.

Accessibility Project – Peter Gailey

- Challenges of codes and safety regulations over time make the accessibility project challenging
- Improving the building’s accessibility has been a top request for improvement to our church by our members
- We are building a comprehensive plan to address a number of physical plant issues:
 - Accessibility to sanctuary and to the bathrooms outside Wesley Hall. Create a new entrance on back side of Verdin Parlor.
 - The “scary steps” to the basement from the front of the sanctuary. Inspectors have been allowing them for now, but do comment that they are not code compliant. State regulation requires access be at that location. If we don’t address it we risk closing of Little Lambs and Ivy.
 - Kitchen’s lighting and ventilation will be improved
 - New signage to identify entrances
 - Adding a bathroom at the sanctuary level
- More information is forthcoming. It’s a bold plan worth pursuing.
- There will be a church vote on the project and church members will have opportunities to ask questions.

Youth – Elizabeth Webber also representing Julie Cutler and Erin Ott

- Youth have the entire top level of the Annex and also utilize the Barn
 - Looking for volunteers to help paint the remainder of the upper rooms in the Annex
- Volunteers are needed for Sunday school. No prep work required of the volunteers; all you need to do is deliver the lesson. The kids are great! The Youth directors would especially appreciate more male teachers.
- Youth Group meets every Thursday evening. They enjoy pizza and share information with each other about their week to develop relationships.
- We need volunteers for VBS. It’s a full-day program requiring more help.

Questions/Comments from Attendees

- Karen Matheson: The Quilters have moved to the upper room above the Church Office. They are grateful for that beautiful space
- Sue Sames: The community spirit in the church is strong; people without family in the area often come to our community events, like potlucks.

Closing Prayer – Gene Ott

ADDENDUM A

This addendum provides additional information not discussed during the Church Council Meeting.

ADULT SPIRITUAL GROWTH – Eileen Brogan

With Deacon Deb's support and guidance, the Adult Spiritual Growth ministry is thriving. In addition to the regular time slots, we introduced a 10:30 Sunday morning class in the fall, but to mixed results. We also added a Thursday evening class hoping to capture those folks who cannot make the other days and times. This timeslot appears to be working well.

We had a very successful LGBTQ+ Series in the fall with the assistance of Jeff and Jenny Euting. There were three sessions and we averaged 20 – 25 people at each, proving that there is an appetite to learn more about this subject. The most exciting part was that we had eight or so people from the community, not members of SUM. Jeff and Jenny are following up with those interested and are planning meetings in their home. I will be attending these meetings in my Adult Spiritual Growth role to determine how SUM can continue to provide education and support for the LGBTQ+ community.

The Lenten studies are planned and will begin the week of February 19th (see details below)

The spring ASG studies will begin after Easter. Planning will be underway soon.

ASG Lenten Classes being offered

Monday Discipleship

Susan Samuel 4:30 – 6

The Gospel of Mark by Amy Jill-Levine

A 6-week book and DVD study starting February 19 (yes, President's Day) to March 25 of Holy Week. Walk through the Bible's earliest source for the life of Jesus with scholar Amy-Jill Levine as she examines John the Baptizer, the Little Apocalypse, the Transfiguration, and several of Jesus's most notable stories and parables. The Good News of the gospel message comes alive in this book as readers see Jesus as divine and human, powerful and weak, approachable yet mysterious. The book features an in-depth study of select passages and illuminates the Gospel in its historical context and as a source for the other gospels.

Monday Night Zoom

Eileen Brogan 6:30 – 7:30

Jon Meacham *The Hope of Glory: Reflections on the Last Words of Jesus from the Cross*

For Jon Meacham, as for believers worldwide, the events of Good Friday and Easter reveal essential truths about Christianity. A former vestryman of Trinity Church Wall Street and St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, Meacham delves into that intersection of faith and history in this meditation on the seven phrases Jesus spoke from the cross.

Beginning with "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" and ending with "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," Meacham captures for the reader how these words epitomize Jesus's message of love, not hate; grace, not rage; and, rather than vengeance, extraordinary mercy. For each saying, Meacham composes an essay on the origins of Christianity and how Jesus's final words created a foundation for oral and written traditions that upended the very order of the world.

Jackpot – Two opportunities to study Kate Bowler

Have a Beautiful, Terrible Day – Kate Bowler’s new book

- Read the Book along with Lee McGivney on Tuesday Morning 10:30 am – 12:00 pm in the Prayer Room, OR
- No Reading Required on Wednesday 5:30 – 6:30 pm Discussion with Deacon Deb in the Annex

Have a Beautiful, Terrible Day by Kate Bowler. Kate Bowler believes that the cultural pressure to be cheerful and optimistic at all times has taken a toll on our faith. But what if we could find better language than forced positivity to express our hopes and our anxieties? *Have a Beautiful, Terrible Day!* is packed with bite-size reflections and action-oriented steps to help you get through the day, be it good, bad, or totally mediocre. This is a devotional for the rest of us—which is to say, the people who don’t have magical lives that always work out for the best.

Like modern-day psalms, Bowler’s spiritual reflections look for the ways we can expand our capacity for courage, love, and honesty—while discovering divine moments with God. With bonus sections to use during the seasons of Advent and Lent, this is an easy book to read along with other people too.

If you want to build your daily habit of spiritual attentiveness, this book is here to say: *May all your days be lovely. But for those that aren’t, have a beautiful, terrible day!*

Where to get used or new books:

The Gospel of Mark by Amy Jill-Levine

Cokesbury.com new \$10.99

Christianbook.com new \$10.99

The Hope of Glory by Jon Meacham

Thriftbooks.com new \$18.43 used very good condition \$ 4.89

Secondsale.com new \$22.00 used good condition \$2.99 (free shipping)

Worldofbooks.com used good condition \$3.98

Amazon.com new \$11.70

Also available at several libraries in the area: Canton, West Hartford, and Windsor

Have a Beautiful, Terrible Day! by Kate Bowler

Cokesbury.com new \$16.99 free shipping

Amazon.com Kindle 12.99 new hardcover \$18.18

ADDENDUM B



Getting Our Work Done at SUM

Background

Organizations, both for profit and non-profit, are facing challenges and changes in terms of how they get the work of their organizations completed. These changes are being driven and accelerated by the impacts of the recent pandemic, and the rising importance of efficiency, effectiveness, flexibility, and governance. The structures and practices of the past may not necessarily meet the rapidly evolving and emerging organizational needs.

A move to a more formal processes & practices and relationships creates the opportunity to provide clarity, structure, accountability, matching skills with needs, and improve the satisfaction of those doing the work. Most importantly, these changes provide the organization with flexibility and achievement of the needed outcomes, while supporting the needs of those who get the work done.

Time horizons are shifting to reflect a sense of urgency in competing work. Short term projects and the need for flexibility and agility in adapting to rapidly changing issues and environment.

These changes have led to the necessity of creating alternative work structures – moving more towards statements of work and defined accountability. Clarity of expectations and relationships are essential. To those ends, forms of documentation are needed to move from informality to formality, providing clarity of relationships, flexibility to the organization and document expectations.

Current Situation and Vulnerabilities

SUM may utilize a “stipend” approach/methodology for compensation to various parties for the provision of services or completion of work. This tool has some attractive benefits for SUM in meeting the needs and challenges outlined above. However, there does not appear to be a process for documentation, support the payment and management control of this process. This presents the potential need for a documented approach for getting our work at SUM completed.

The growth in size of the church, the complexity of its work as it involves multiple skill areas, the required skill sets increasingly challenge the completion of the work of SUM.

SUM needs to reconsider how it completes its work and accesses qualified sources for services, consulting, and supplies.

The following represents a structure and process to create an efficient and effective relationships between organizations and those people who get the work of the organization done or provide needed services. The anticipated process will involve a minimum of two SUM leaders for acceptance of agreements, as well as the acceptance of the work by a qualified party. Therefore, this becomes a SUM business practice and individual contracts may not be subject to any one committee (e.g., Finance, Church Council or SPR).

A Set of Solutions:

Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”)	Memorandum of Agreement (“MOA”)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attributes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes in broad, loose terms the agreement reached between two parties (people, organizations, etc.) • Establishes mutually accepted expectations of both/all parties • Not necessarily legally binding • Similar to “letter of intent” • Much simpler than a contract or agreement • Usually not enforceable by law; documents simple, common cause agreements • Much simpler than a “contract” • Content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parties involved • Contact details for all parties • Date effective; termination • Broad principles of agreement • Scope of work to be completed, deliverables, time frames, due dates, etc. • If a stipend (“consideration”) is involved, it provides conditions for payment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Upon Completion of work” • SUM Party who must approve completion of work & payment • Examples of Use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal relationships between SUM and its members • Smaller scopes of work, small financial consideration, etc. • Short term projects/engagements • Documentation Guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work value < \$7,500; • Short term deliverables; less than 9 months, <u>or</u> • Services/work provided by individuals from the SUM community • Template created to facilitate documentation process • Benefits to SUM: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes clear understanding of services, work and expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attributes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish common legal terms that establish “conditions”, where a transfer of funds (significant) is anticipated • Establishes conditions, expectations, understandings, remedies, termination, breach, etc. • Content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of agreement • Names, contact information of parties • Detailed description of roles and responsibilities • Scope, deliverables, time frames <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Payment (consideration) ○ Signature of both parties (offer and acceptance) • More contractual in nature, and usually considered to be legally enforceable • Examples of Use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External suppliers, consultants, subcontractors • Larger scope of work, larger financial consideration, etc. • Documentation Guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work valued at > \$7,500; • Relationships > 6 or 9 months, or ongoing; or • Work or services provided by non-SUM individuals or organizations • Involve SUM Trustees in the creation and acceptance of a contract • Need to create a template to facilitate MOA/Contract preparation • Benefits to SUM: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes clear understanding of services, work and expectations • Enhanced transparency • Provides documentation for accounting, compensation and internal audit • Provides remedy for breach and terms for termination • Ensures completion of work or delivery of services before payment (contract consideration), particularly with external parties • Manage UMC apportionments

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced transparency • Provides documentation for accounting, compensation and internal audit • Align limited financial resources with organization direction • Documents need for work to be completed, any payment for services, work, and expectations • Ensure completion of work, services before payment • (stipend) • Manage UMC apportionments • Clarifies expectations and duration • No Employee/Employer relationship with time bound work • Considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thresholds? • Work completed by SUM members vs. O/S parties • Legal Review of template of MOU document • Interaction of SPR, Finance, Trustees and Church Council • Approval and Implementation • Process • Example of utilization of an MOU: <p>An SUM church member has agreed to fulfill the role of youth leader for the prospective program year. They have agreed to do so in receipt of a stipend of \$3,000 for the year. With this limited financial exposure (\$3,000) as services provided by an SUM “member”, a limited form of documentation (non-binding “MOU”) should be executed to document the terms of service and payment which provides the understood services to be provided by this SUM member, the expected time frames and agreement by both SUM and the member providing the services. This document also outlines the agreed stipend as well as payment terms/conditions and serves as supporting documentation for payment/disbursement</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Employee/Employer Relationship • Stronger financial management • Considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thresholds? • Trustees’ approval of contracts • Legal Review of “template”, contract standards, etc. • Customized contracts, or vendor/provider contract wording • Interaction of SPR, Finance, Trustees and Church Council • Approval and Implementation • “Procurement Process” • Example of Utilization of an MOA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUM contracts for snow removal services, on an annual basis, with a contract cost of \$12,500. With the total annual cost exceeding a threshold of \$7,500, an enforceable • Memorandum of Understanding/Contract should be executed outlining the terms of service, costs, consideration (payment terms) and means for remedying any disputes under the MOA/Contract. This document will protect both parties (SUM and the contractor) as well as provide the supporting documentation for payment/disbursement.
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