

**Ministry Council Meeting Minutes**  
**November 16, 2020 at 6:30pm via Zoom conference call**

Attending: Judy Belter (chairperson), Rev. Jason Valendy, Rev. Estee Valendy, Melanie Grice (recording secretary), Lou Tiner, Erik Skaarer, David Gerig, Keith Bierley, Amanda Stansberger, Toni Bliss, Polly Soulsby

Guests: David Burke, Rev. Lauren Christenberry

Judy called the meeting to order at 6:32pm.

**Introduction**

David B. introduced himself as the incoming lay leader. He is attending the meeting to learn about the activities of Ministry Council before his role begins in 2021.

**125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**

Toni shared tentative plans for Keller UMC's 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration (Appendix A). She plans to form a task force and sub-committees to preserve historical items and share KUMC's story.

Judy asked what is needed now.

Toni said the main thing is to establish the date of the celebration, then she will begin assembling volunteers.

Polly shared a book by Bobby Wells about the history of a church in Joshua. She will pass on to Toni since the history of the two churches overlaps in the early years.

Melanie noted that the church has a designated fund for Stained Glass. She recommended utilizing that fund if needed for restoration or display of stained glass pieces from the old church building.

Judy asked if we had a consensus to proceed. It was affirmed by the Council to proceed with the staff determining a date, probably in October of 2022. Estee offered to be the staff liaison for this event.

**Boy Scout Troops**

Lou shared information about BSA. They have been sued and forced into bankruptcy as a result of allegations of abuse of minors by adult leaders. Litigants are pursuing alternatives, including sponsoring organizations, as potential defendants to collect compensation.

Keller UMC had an opportunity to join a group with the conference for legal services at no cost. The Trustees voted to join this group. KUMC can leave the group at any time and obtain its own counsel.

Lou has checked our insurance policy to verify that it covers up to \$1 million per incident, \$3 million in aggregate.

BSA is currently in the annual re-chartering process, with three continuing groups and one new group at KUMC. The process is to be completed by December 2020.

BSA volunteers are required to complete training with BSA and KUMC also requires Safe Sanctuary training.

David B. is retired from BSA after 36 years. He offered his expertise if needed.

Lou said at this time he just wanted to update Ministry Council. No action is needed and he is not expecting any problems to develop.

### **Staff and Ministries Update**

Keith reported that the office is still generally closed to visitors, but the staff is back to working nearly normal office hours. They remain in yellow light phase.

Age level ministries are also in yellow light phase and doing mostly remote activities.

Building Blocks had students with symptoms but no diagnosis. Staff members proactively decided to close this week and through Thanksgiving to allow time to quarantine.

### **Hybrid Worship Update**

Estee reported that first hybrid worship services were held yesterday. KUMC kept taking reservations all week, and there was a lot of movement during the week with reservations and cancellations. The 9am service had 42 pods (113 people) attending and the 11am service had 28 pods (65 people) attending.

There were no problems, as attendees complied with safety protocols and wore masks. There was no significant wait for checking in as people arrived at staggered times. After worship, pastors went outside and congregants followed quickly without much lingering inside or outside.

The praise band packed up quickly, which left plenty of time for fogging and sanitation.

Estee said she is proud of KUMC and the response to the situation. She sees the potential need to reduce the maximum attendance given the recent spikes in COVID cases. The 9am service felt full, but with lower attendance, she feels we can continue to operate safely.

Estee and Melanie worked on a response if anyone who attended later is diagnosed with COVID. Melanie shared the latest CDC recommendations, available on their website. If KUMC follows its own protocols, there is no need to automatically quarantine even if there is a diagnosis. KUMC would notify attendees of diagnosis reports, but not recommend automatic quarantine.

Estee recommends continuing with the hybrid worship model, and would like the affirmation of Ministry Council.

Judy said the Council decided at the last meeting to begin hybrid worship. She does not see the need to ask for consensus again.

Erik noted that the Council discussed potentially closing if Tarrant County returned to red status, which it has. The County is now recommending that churches close.

Toni said she brought two guests from Evergreen to worship this week. The guests are at higher risk, but it was very meaningful for them and they were grateful for the opportunity.

Judy noted that people are able to self-select on whether to attend as they read or watch the news.

Estee said that even if very few people attend, staff would support continuing with the hybrid model to accommodate.

Keith said he understands Erik's point of view, but noted that we are at a very low percentage of capacity for the space. He recommends evaluating week to week and remaining cautious, but continuing. He doesn't think the congregation will abuse the trust.

Erik said he wants people to have choices, but questions if we are doing right by the medical community by allowing congregating. This potentially puts people at risk unnecessarily.

Estee said she has mixed feelings. There was a nurse in attendance who shared how happy she was to be there.

Jason said he has been thinking a lot about the common good, and lately has been hearing a lot about isolation and the effects on mental health. He is not sure there is a right answer, and that any answer involves trade-offs. The staff seems committed to offering experiences for Christmas Eve to help answer some of the pent-up demand for normalcy. Practicing hybrid worship now offers opportunities to practice safety protocols.

Polly said the time we have spent discussing this matter reflects the lack of easy answers. She has seen news reports on spread through churches, but also on mental health effects.

Judy noted that our protocols are much stricter than those practiced by many other churches. She trusts Lou's plan and our congregation. There is a big difference between what KUMC is doing and what is happening at other churches. We are also still offering the choice to have meaningful worship at home.

Lou said he is grateful for all leaders and the conscientious way they have tried to navigate this process. He personally thinks we should continue with hybrid worship, even though we previously decided to close if the status in the county went to red. The people who showed up respected each other, and the staff did everything possible to protect them. He recommends moving forward and giving pastoral leadership space to make future decisions.

### **Christmas Eve**

Estee shared potential Christmas Eve worship times developed by staff:

10:30am Inside (at-risk): Lessons and Carols with Sean, Carl, Audrey

(Optional 3:30 Inside: Brass/Choir)

5:30pm Inside: Brass/Choir

7:30pm Outside: Band

11pm Inside: Lessons and Carols with Sean, Carl, Audrey

The attendance numbers for inside times would be very limited, but those services would also be streamed. She recommends communicating soon and opening up reservations. If the inside times fill quickly, the optional time could be added.

Keith asked how we would deal with walk-ins.

Estee said we could accommodate a few walk-ins, but would need to come up with a plan if more showed up without reservations.

Keith anticipates a large number of walk-ins, and recommends thinking through how to turn away people graciously.

Polly asked if family members would be able to accompany a high-risk person to the service designated for high-risk individuals.

Estee said yes, that reservations are self-selecting.

Toni asked where the outside service would be held.

Estee said worship staff intends to have another outdoor service at 11am on December 6. It will be outdoors in the back parking lot, similar to the one we had in October. The 7:30pm Christmas Eve service would be in the same location. She also noted that the 3:30 service could be outside if we discover that demand is high.

Lou said he will take on the responsibility of coming up with a plan and alternatives for walk-ins.

### **Adult Sunday School**

Lauren said she feels the tension every day regarding the issue of when and how to open. When the email was sent to the congregation announcing hybrid worship, she immediately received a message from an adult Sunday school class asking to reserve a room. She took the issue to staff, and received no clear answer, so she is bringing to Ministry Council.

Lauren polled the class leaders about the interest in returning in person with the restrictions of no nursery or children's classes. Two groups wanted to come back with these restrictions, and each has about twenty people. We could utilize the "clean room", which is four rooms put together, and one other large room, to allow for social distancing. She is concerned that the staff loses some control in making sure people follow protocols when they are not in the Sanctuary.

Erik said allowing these groups in would look out of place when youth activities were just cancelled. The message is not consistent.

Lauren agrees. She would only communicate with those two classes, but does not intend to make the accommodation a secret.

Judy said that some groups are already back in the building.

Lauren said a small yoga group is meeting on Monday mornings. The men's breakfast group met briefly, but is now back to Zoom meetings.

Lou said he does not endorse taking this step at this time. Things will hopefully be changing soon with news about potential vaccines. He is concerned about drawing the line as word gets out that some things are open and we receive more and more requests.

Amanda agreed that now is not the best time. She is part of a Bible study whose members are not ready to meet inside at all.

David G. agreed that it is too early.

Lauren said she feels comfortable for the groups to remain on Zoom or meet outside. She is grateful for the feedback.

## **Charge Conference**

Jason reported that the online charge conference meeting lasted only 14 minutes. The paperwork KUMC submitted was formally approved.

The Finance Committee will meet tomorrow to begin reviewing the 2021 budget, with the intention of finalizing at their December meeting.

David B., David G., and Jason will communicate with those rolling on committees, staying on committees, and rolling off committees. Once all members are confirmed and all spots are filled, the list will be announced, most likely in December.

Lou said he is not clear on the terms for members of Ministry Council. Jason said those will be posted. Judy noted that they are listed on the website.

## **Communication Plan**

Judy asked whether Ministry Council's next meeting should be December 21 or 28. Melanie is unavailable if December 21 is chosen. Jason offered to be the recording secretary for that meeting if needed.

Judy said the meeting could be skipped altogether if no items are presented for the agenda.

Melanie said it is the normal process for final approval on the budget to occur in January, so this would not cause any problems.

Estee pointed out that the membership of the Ministry Council will change, so which group would meet in January? She recommends one more meeting of this body.

Judy said that depending on the response to requests for agenda items, the next meeting of the current Council will be either December 21 or in early January.

## **Finance Update**

Amanda said the Finance Committee plans to meet tomorrow, with the primary task of reviewing the preliminary budget.

October 2020 giving was similar to October 2019 and expenses for the month were slightly lower than income. We are still in the high end of the basement using our house analogy for cash position.

Melanie reported that the Paycheck Protection Plan loan forgiveness application has cleared our bank and is now with the Small Business Administration for final approval.

Jason closed in prayer at 8pm.

Appendix A

2022 Celebration – 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for Keller United Methodist Church

11/20 MC Meeting

- Date: TBA (probably 10/22) – decision to be made within 1<sup>st</sup> Q in 2021
- Theme: “How did we get here?” – working title only
- Goals: To celebration the current, past and future members of the church  
To celebration the current, past and future clergy of the church  
To celebration the history of the Keller UMC
- Taskforce: Requests to membership for those wanting to serve in this celebration
- Sub committees:
- 1) gather contact information for past clergy, members, support staff city officials, district and conference officials, other officials to invite
  - 2) Update history database items for preservation – decision to convert old VCR tapes, slides, original minutes and paper documents
  - 3) Celebration presentation to congregation – campus and facility set-up
  - 4) Communication
  - 5) TBA – as needed: song? Altar cloth? Rededication of garden? Original stained glass (there is a designated fund for such glass)?