

**Hilltop United Methodist Church**  
**Administrative Council Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, October 20, 2016, 7:30 pm**

**Present:** Jeff Adams, Judy Argetsinger, John Phelps, Fred Vanderwerf, Marj Blommel, Karen Frydendall, Kelly McCuaig, Jean Jackson, Kari Juni, Kerry Rausch, Stacy Vanderwerf, Paula Peterson, Shannon McCuaig, Herb Fast, Bob Berg, Terry Berg, Michelle Behsman, Paulette Adams, Paulette Booker, Bill Scherer, Adela Scherer, Beverly Cox, Louis Allen, Carolyn Allen, Carl Kiewatt, Sandra Kiewatt, Aaron Daby, Shirley Courier.

**Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from the meeting on September 15, 2016 were available for review. A motion was made by Paulette Booker to approve the minutes as presented. Bob Berg seconded. The motion carried.

**Pastor:** Pastor Kelly gave a brief overview of the format and goals of the meeting. Prior to the meeting Kelly had emailed the Ad Council with his concerns about recent feedback on the worship change. He asked that all teams email their reports in order to devote as much time as possible to discuss worship. Also primary to the meeting was the business of approving the 2017 budget. Kelly opened the meeting with a service of word and table inviting all to share in communion and asking that God's love and grace abound as important decisions are made as we seek to fulfill our mission of inviting all to celebrate God in worship, growing in Christ, and serving others.

**Committee Reports:** Jeff drew attention to the committee reports that were emailed and printed and asked if there were any questions or action that needed to take place. Judy Argetsinger asked what the current cost was for the CCLI license and what the cost would be for the Stream and Video licenses that Don had recommended in the Technology report. Don was absent and not available to answer. Judy also asked about the following budgeted items: youth group (\$1000), Southern Prairie district asking (\$182.00), and recent technology expenditures for upgrades. Michelle Behsman responded that \$1000 had been transferred to the Youth Fund but was not entirely used and the district asking was recently received and would be paid. The technology upgrades were paid and will appear on the October finance report. Michelle explained that the budgeted tech funds of \$1950 were depleted but that trustees had designated \$11,000 for AC units in the west classroom to be used for technology and that \$2011 was also remaining in designated funds for technology. Jeff then turned to Kerry Rausch to present the proposed 2017 budget.

**2017 Budget:** Kerry explained that she met with Pastor Kelly, Michelle, and Shannon to reclassify the budget into categories which reflect Hilltop's mission of Inward, Upward, and Outward, and also general operating expenses. The proposed budget total for 2017 is \$355,289.68, a 6% increase over 2016 (Upward-\$6,320, Inward-\$7,400, Outward-\$23,300.76, General Operations-\$318,268.92). General Operations includes salary and benefits for pastor and staff, apportionments, administrative and kitchen supplies, utilities, insurance, maintenance, major repairs and capital improvements. Kerry asked for discussion and questions regarding the proposed budget. Jean Jackson asked about the increase in staff funding. Kerry explained that this was primarily due to \$55,000 budgeted for the youth campus minister position which is not yet filled. Kelly added that the position was approved at the annual charge conference in Nov. 2015 and that the council had hoped to have this position filled by June 2016. John Phelps added that Hilltop has been blessed and the Increase Fund has a substantial dollars set aside for future staffing needs. John Phelps made a motion to approve the proposed 2017 budget and

Paulette Booker seconded. There was no further discussion and after a unanimous vote the budget was approved as presented. Kerry then presented the pastoral compensation Form 5, which is used by the conference in determining pension and benefits, detailing a base salary - \$41,421.45, parsonage penalty adjustment - \$282.00, church share of health insurance - \$15,069, church share of pension - \$7,145.41, continuing education - \$1,000, travel expenses - \$1250, professional expenses - \$2500, and parsonage utilities - \$7,000. Judy Argetsinger inquired about the purpose of the parsonage penalty adjustment to which Fred explained was an adjustment set by the conference for clergy who are living in a parsonage and not building equity through home ownership. Stacy Vanderwerf made a motion to approve the Form 5 for pastoral compensation and Bob Berg seconded the motion. The motion carried. Kerry then presented Form 13, a checklist for protection of church finances, which is required at the annual church conference.

**Worship:** Jeff Adams opened the discussion on worship expressing his concern that the group gathered would reach a consensus and leave loving each other. Marj Blommel voiced her concern that not all members were present and felt that reaching consensus is not possible because not all voices are represented. Jeff said that the worship committee is tasked to make choices about worship and the goal is for Ad Council and the worship committee to take all formal input into account. Jeff then turned the discussion over to Fred Vanderwerf who gave a historical account of how Hilltop came to the decision of changing worship. He reminded the leaders of his teaching on “acting our size” and said that we are no longer a small church. He said that 80% of churches never reach over 125 in worship attendance. In a church of this size a pastor interacts with every family but with our current average attendance of 191 we are now in a category in which only 20% of churches reach. At this size a pastor must change the way decisions are made. The question is, “how do we maintain values as we continue to grow.” Fred then asked the group to consider the current faces they see in worship – noting that the congregation is changing. He said that two-thirds of the congregation is relatively new to Hilltop and as our congregation changes then we have to adapt to change. He said that he too saw the need to change the music and worship when he was lead pastor but did not act. Last spring Pastor Kelly asked the congregation what they envisioned for worship and after gathering input he boldly led the worship team in making that change. Fred also acknowledged that with Hilltop leading the district there is a high expectation that Kelly not lose the momentum.

Jeff then opened the discussion to all and began by reading two formal concerns. There were nine members in attendance in addition to the administrative council who shared thoughts and concerns about the change in worship. Some voiced their concern about the worship service itself: 1) they prefer the familiar hymns played on the organ, 2) without a melody line or music to read they find the new tunes difficult to sing, 3) did not care for familiar hymns sung to another tune, 4) the length of two songs back to back is too long to stay standing, 5) did not want worship to be a concert or performance because they want to participate. Because of the changes in worship there was concern that Hilltop had lost membership and would continue in this trend as they believe that others are “church shopping”. Some voiced concerns about how the worship change took place citing lack of communication, lack of congregational involvement and being surprised and shocked by the change. They felt that people had been hurt by this transition. Also some felt that the worship change was not what had been

communicated – they expected a blend of traditional hymns and contemporary music but felt that it was entirely contemporary. Kelly expressed his concern with the pain and hurt that this change has caused and assumed full responsibility.

The leadership also shared that they had been hurt by hateful letters and comments and were disappointed by the way some were lashing out at Pastor Kelly and Michael Olson. Paulette Adams said that we need to remember that Pastor Kelly is a brand new pastor, this is his first church, and he needs our support. She said that both Kelly and the leadership recognize that they did not implement this change well and understand that we need to go slower. Jeff said that in meeting with Michael (for 3 hours) he found him to be very accommodating and willing to make adjustments to feedback received. He went on to say that Hilltop has been very blessed to have gifted pastors; Jim, Randy, Fred and now Kelly and through their preaching it is as though we have been exposed to the very heart of God. He gave an illustration of his tech work stating that new code entered into the compiler never works the first time. Also in his experience with the Nat'l Guard he found that no battle plan survives the first attack. He said that if we are trying to reach millennials and they love this music and style of worship then if not now.....when?

Kerry Rausch asked the group to look at the broader picture and consider the goals of Hilltop in clarifying what worship should look like. One person stated the purpose of worship is to create an atmosphere where young and old feel the presence of God and if our new worship and music accomplishes that goal that's okay. There were suggestions that Hilltop offer two distinctly different worship services, one traditional and one contemporary. Karen Frydendall explained that at a previous ad council meeting she learned that the leadership did not want to have two separate services because they felt it would separate the congregation and the hope was to have a multi-generational worship experience. Others suggested that we offer a blended and a contemporary service; that we have had a blended service for years. The blended service would have more traditional Methodist hymns but would continue to add variety. There was still concern that two different worship services would split the congregation by age and some who said that they love to see families and young people at worship. Jeff Adams said that the worship schedule through January as planned is way more blended. One person suggested that the path forward should be decided by the entire congregation, while another person entrusted the council and pastor as pastors have more knowledge in how to reach people.

Final closing comments were made by Pastor Kelly and Fred Vanderwerf. Kelly stated that his actions come from a sense of urgency – there are some people who don't know Jesus and we need to reach them, not six months from now or in six years, but yesterday. Our denomination is dying – we are in the fastest declining conference in the United States. He explained that we are hosts with God calling people to the banquet and we need to prepare food people will like. Our worship should first and foremost honor God and beckon to those who are not here and care for those who are. He also shared the words of DS Walkes, who spoke at the consecration service of Hilltop when it first began, "We've done well, now let's excel." Fred stated that churches that are growing have the following characteristics in their worship service: 1) Innovation, 2) Excellence, 3) Commitment to Identity, 4) Evaluation. He confirmed Kelly's statement of our conference decline; that of our 350 churches 40% had under 50 in worship attendance and 35% had under 25. We have no churches that have over 500 in

worship, the largest is 375. We have lost 33% of our membership to death or withdrawal in the last 10 years. Most discouraging to Fred was the fact that few of the pastors in the conference can tell him why Jesus matters. He shared that while he was pastor of Hilltop he did love reaching new people, but that Kelly wants to take Hilltop deeper – ensuring that all know why Jesus matters.

Jeff shared his thoughts on the incarnation of Christ, acknowledging that our notions are dictated by cultural norms. While some may see the incarnation of Christ as a Precious Moments nativity scene, Jeff envisions it more like a scene from “Band of Brothers” in which paratroopers are approaching the drop zone. When we are locked in spiritual warfare, the closer we are to the target the more likely we are to pick up flak. Are we going to follow Jesus into battle or are we going to get bunched up at the door? Kelly closed the meeting with prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 p.m. Next meeting is Dec. 15, 2016.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Behsman