

Grace United Methodist Church
Simplified Accountable Leadership Team Meeting
May 13th, 2024, 7pm

Our Mission: To invite all people to encounter and develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, all for the glory of God.

Core Values: Christ, hospitality, participation, spiritual growth, relationships, service, evangelism, scripture.

Present: Chris Walls, Eric Falker, Pete Larsen, Zach DeYoung, Jake Manchester and Bob Richards. Mary Lou Vinson and Rae Vaught were out of town. Lezley Heldt was not available.

7:04 pm: Pastor Eric opened the meeting with a passage from Isaiah 42. "...a bruised reed he will not break..." Rely on God's grace, not on our work and God will take care of the rest. Highlighting the humility and gentleness of God.

7:07 pm: Chris brought the business meeting to order and opened the floor for business items.

Old Business:

- Eric mentioned that we had talked about a grill party after church on Father's Day but we currently don't have anyone to coordinate. Who might bring grills? Who can set up things outside if we want to eat out there? Zach indicated that he will need to leave right after church. Pete will likely also have to leave after, if not before, church. Another option might be to go to a park. Consensus is to change this to be in conjunction with the outdoor service in Kestner park, which is scheduled for July 21.
- Fire extinguishers have been taken for inspection and will be recertified and replaced as needed. A special gift can be put toward this.
- Elevator testing needs to be done. We have sent the deposit and it will be scheduled as soon as the repairs are done. Costs detailed in the April minutes.
- There was a gift made to cover the cost of installing two new water heaters. They have been ordered and will be installed soon. Costs were detailed in the April meeting minutes.
- Gary Heldt is going to put an escape bar on the old front door downstairs. This is already purchased and is just awaiting install.

Report/Items from Pastor Eric

- Some things will be going on hiatus for the summer, including children's church, youth group, choir, bible study. Nursery will continue. VBS will occur.
- Vacation Bible School will be August 5-9, 2024 from 9-noon. The morning plan is the choice of the people leading the event, with the idea that daytime might bring in more people. There was some discussion about whether a morning or an evening event is better. There was a question about whether or not transportation might help bring people who might otherwise not be able to make it.
- Pastor Eric asked for feedback on the ages of the people going out to children's church and has been making a point to announce the ages each week. Consensus was that this is good.
- Spring cleaning went well earlier this month.
- Eric asked if we wanted to talk about General Conference. Eric noted that the main issues were related to human sexuality. The general conference resulted in now the UMC being able to ordain LGBTQ clergy and churches are allowed to bless same-sex unions, with the decision at the local church level. Also "regionalization" is in progress, which will allow more conservative regions (e.g., Africa, Philippines) to make regional decisions in this regard. Eric wonders if GUMC would like to make a policy related to this for our church. The wording is that a church won't be penalized if we do or don't want to allow same-sex marriage in the church. At some point we will likely be asked if that can happen in our church. Eric is feeling that he is not personally called to do same-sex marriages. This is allowed by conscience now at the pastoral and church level.
- Related to this discussion, Zach wondered if we want to revisit our core values (as listed in the membership directory and in various other places). He felt that some of the core values might come across as harsh.
- Michigan Annual Conference will be coming up at the end of May and early June. The things from the recent General Conference (e.g., regionalization) will not be on the agenda until 2025.

New Business

- Do we want to make a policy on same-sex marriage as a church? The consensus of the SALT is that Grace UMC believes that marriage is available to all children of God. Zach made a motion and Chris seconded that we affirm this. All in favor. The pastor will make a determination on his comfort level for marrying each couple and will help people find a pastor, as needed, if he is not comfortable performing the ceremony.
- At a future meeting, we will review the church wedding policy, which was previously developed by the trustees to make sure that it is in accordance with our affirmation.

- There was discussion about the “endowment” spending policy, as sent out by Pastor Eric. Bob had some suggestions for potential changes to the policy. His suggestion is that we take the excess over the principal (\$150,000) and put it into an interest-bearing account. The general goal of this philosophy would be to try to keep the endowment amount generating funds and each year we would determine how to use excess that might be earned this year (or retained from any prior year) in an interest-bearing account (e.g. money market account). Bob is willing to edit the policy with some suggestions for consideration at the next meeting.

8:17 pm – Closing prayer by Jake

– **Next meeting is Monday, June 10th, 2024, 7-8:30pm**