

**Epiphany Lutheran Church
Council Meeting
June 10, 2010**

In attendance: Don Maurer, Beth Bolyard, Pastor Tim Kuenzli, Brian Meinardi, Renita Hillis, Carol Low, Julie Everhart, Mike Renner, Darby Graves, Charley Cline, Al Nelson, Lynn Chrisman, Jerry Kisner, Dave Zimmer, and Rick Wuerth.

Excused: Sally Reeb and Renita Hillis.

Opening: Vice President Don Maurer called the meeting to order. Carol Low offered a devotion on understanding God's love.

Housekeeping: Charley Cline will be responsible for July devotions.

Guests: Several guests attended the meeting. Dave and Darcy Fortner and John and Rita Ricketts of Epiphany spoke on the topic of the ELCA's recent decision permitting ordination of homosexual clergy. Pastor Bill McKee of the Southern Ohio Synod gave a presentation on synod and ELCA finances to assist council in developing policies for Epiphany's benevolence program.

Dave Fortner: Dave Fortner said that he strongly disagreed with the ELCA's decision permitting ordination of homosexual clergy. Dave questioned the process which led to the decision suggesting that the issue should have been determined by a general vote of all ELCA church members. Dave explained that he held no malice toward any man, but believed that the decision concerning ordination was the first step among many condoning homosexual conduct which he sincerely believes is contrary to biblical teachings and morally wrong. Dave said that neither he nor members of his family could in good consciences support an institution that fostered such conduct. Dave asked council whether there was any method allowing his family and him to continue providing financial support to Epiphany and broader church benevolences, but prohibiting the use of any of those funds to support the ELCA or, at least, ELCA programs connected with the ordination of homosexual clergy.

Darcy Fortner, and John and Rita Ricketts joined with Dave reiterating many of his points and adding to them from their own perspectives.

Council discussed the ELCA decision and various members made observations concerning the matter. The ELCA has acknowledged that the decision permitting ordination of homosexuals is controversial and that church members may in good conscience maintain different views on the topic, ranging from the position that such ordinations should be prohibited to the position that they are important and desirable in furthering the mission of the Church. There is little chance that the ELCA will change the decision and we shall likely be faced with some ambiguity in the church position for the foreseeable future. Respected Lutheran theologians disagree on the biblical support for or prohibition against ordination of homosexual clergy members. The decision was surprising to church leaders and, perhaps, to the congregational representatives attending the national meeting where the measure was adopted. Most of the representatives were ordinary church members and pastors like the people attending our council meeting. They approved the action by a 2/3ds majority, although the Southern Ohio Synod, in its assembly prior to the ELCA churchwide assembly, did not support the proposed actions. Lastly, despite all of the controversy, the decision probably will have little practical effect on the day to day church life of most Lutherans. The decision deals with a handful of pastors. ELCA congregations have the authority to call their own clergy. No congregation will be forced to accept a homosexual pastor against its will.

Dave Fortner's request for guidance on ways his family might restrict use of their donations raises an issue similar to the one council has been reviewing in the context of benevolence. In general terms, the issue is the extent to which it is appropriate for local congregations and/or individual members to control expenditure of benevolence dollars. Pastor McKee's comments are relevant to this issue.

Pastor McKee: Pastor Tim invited Pastor McKee to assist Epiphany in developing a policy concerning the direct support of church missions as opposed to the traditional approach of supporting missions through contribution to the synod and the larger church. For instance, Epiphany provides direct support to First English Lutheran Church and is entertaining a request for similar support from OSU campus ministry Jacob's Porch.

How far should Epiphany go in developing its own benevolence program? What are the consequences of expanded congregational programs on the mission on the synod and ELCA?

Pastor McKee's remarks covered the financial relationships between the synod and its various congregations and between the Synod and the larger church. He also reported on events within the Southern Ohio Synod following the ELCA decision on ordination of homosexuals. In discussing these topics, he expressed the hope that we do not lose the sense of what we do as a larger church.

The ELCA consists of approximately 10,000 congregations organized into 65 synods. When the ELCA was organized, the hope was that individual members would tithe, donating 10% of their income to the church. Congregation would remit 15% of their receipts to their respective synods which, in turn, would pass along 55% of their receipts to the larger church.

In practice, this model is not widely followed. There are 220 congregations in the Southern Ohio Synod. 18 of these have requested that none of their remittances to the synod be shared with the larger church. In addition, there are a number on congregations which do not give to the synod. Some of these congregations are financially unable to donate money.

Last year, the Southern Ohio Synod sent 50% of its receipts to the ELCA. Synod receipts were down 15%, in part, because of the bad economy, but, also, probably because of the decision on ordination. The Synod was forced to draw on reserves. It cannot afford to do that again this year. The Synod's overall financial picture is stressed again this year and its payments to the wider church will be reduced. Pastor McKee estimated the synod remittance to the ELCA in terms of percent of Synod receipts would be in the low 40% range.

Pastor McKee reported the one Southern Ohio Synod congregation voted to leave the ELCA in response to the decision concerning the ordination of homosexual clergy. Two other congregations voted to remain in the synod and two additional congregations intend to vote on the issue later this year. There have been greater disruptions in other synods.

Pastor Tim added that two families and one individual have stopped attending Epiphany in reaction to the ELCA decision.

Vice President Maurer thanked the Fortners and Ricketts for their comments and they left the meeting.

Council Discussion: Council discussion continued touching upon a variety of topics including support for First English and Jacob's Porch; the feasibility of setting up endowment funds and other techniques to permit church member to designate the use of their gifts; and the accounting and policy issues presented by more complicated giving programs. Both Pastor Tim and Pastor McKee noted that congregations commonly offer their members a variety of options in designating the use of their donations. Such programs can increase overall giving because people like to know how their money is being spent.

While it may be appropriate for congregations to develop their own missions and to encourage member to give at a local level, council members noted that we need to be aware such programs can reduce support flowing to the synod and wider church. As congregational support dries up so does support for many outreach programs. Some of these are important on a national and global level. Indeed, Jacob Porch's financial difficulties are attributable in part to the synod's reduced ability to support the program. Balance between local initiatives and support for the synod and ELCA is necessary.

Pastor McKee repeated his hope that in deciding how to proceed we do not lose sight of all that we accomplish through the larger church.

Vice President Maurer thanked Pastor McKee for his assistance and he departed.

After further discussion, a consensus developed that it is appropriate for Epiphany to provide options for members to designate or restrict the use of their donations. Council felt that it is particularly important to provide such an option to members who are conscience bound to a position on a controversial issues. Council members noted that the development of a specific program required study, but agreed to proceed as expeditiously as possible.

Upon motion of Mike Renner, seconded by Rick Wuerth (???)
Council unanimously adopted the following resolution:

RESOLVED that Church Council explore options for developing a program of targeted giving which permits congregation members and others to designate the use of their donations for specific church purposes with a view toward adopting such a program in the near future.

Old Business: Council reviewed draft minutes from the May 13, 2010 meeting. Upon motion duly made and seconded, council unanimously approved the minutes as drafted.

New Business:

Financial Secretary's/Treasurers Reports: Financial secretary Julie Everhart reported that Epiphany had receipts of approximately \$63,000 during the month of May 2010, approximately \$11,000 below budget for the month and approximately \$31,000 below budget for the year. This includes the \$10,000 booking error discussed in earlier minutes. We are \$20,000 behind where we were last year at this time. Easter contributions were a one shot deal this year. There was little follow through after Easter Sunday. We are entering summer doldrums and receipts will probably be low until next fall.

Treasurer Brian Meinardi reported that year to date our cash is down \$26,500. We are under \$100,000 in unrestricted cash which bears watching. The major variance between the budget and actual expenditures is the \$14,000 we paid during the past several months for unbudgeted HVAC work. The only expenses over \$500 during May were \$5,400 for HVAC work and \$3,500 to LOMO for the scheduled Vacation Bible School program.

Upon Motion of Dave Zimmer, seconded by Al Nelson, council unanimously approved the Financial Secretary's/Treasurers report.

Round Table:

Social Services: Jerry Kisner reported that his committee is active with local food pantries. Jerry noted that the Lancaster Eagle Gazette

published a very nice article about Sandy Poyer and her work at Epiphany in organizing a brown bag program in conjunction with PCMA Food Pantry. The program provides food to needy school children during summer break.

Property: Al Nelson reported that as a follow up on discussions at last month's meeting regarding the possibility of establishing a reserve for building maintenance, he spoke with Roger McCloney about estimating probable roofing expenses and developing a reserve. Roger suggested that the church set aside \$6,000 to \$8,000 annually with a view toward accumulating \$30,000 to \$40,000 for roofing work in a 5 year time frame.

The property committee working on developing figures for prospective HVAC work. This effort is being assisted by a new church member. The new member and his son are in the trade and may be able to give the committee a handle on the useful life of various systems as well as repair cost factors.

The committee has an estimate of \$14,000 to repair pavement damage in the parking lot. This does not include sealing. The committee members are investigating the possibility of lining up equipment to repair the damage themselves at substantial savings. Pavement sealing will have to be addressed after the repairs. It does not appear feasible to do sealing on a self help basis. The job is too big. The project will be expensive.

Pastor Tim added that 21 people showed up to help spread mulch. They spread 20 cubic yards in 1 1/4 hours.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Tim updated council on several matters. Grace Lutheran is still in the process of finding a location to build a new church. Pastor Tim will be meeting with Grace's congregational president on Saturday to get an update on overall situation.

The meeting with Pastor Binou on the Haiti *Timoun* foundation went forward on May 18, but it does not appear that there will involvement by Epiphany members in the near future. At the present time, the foundation is not conducting visioning trips. Its efforts are directed to finding construction and building trades people to assist in Haitian reconstruction work.

Christian Education: Mike Renner reported that Sunday school teachers will be recognized next Sunday at the 9:30 service.

Congregational Life: Darby Graves reported that her committee is purchasing supplies for the 4th of July event to be hosted by the Evangelism Committee.

CD Program: Charley Cline reported that the Barb Wilson approved use of funds memorializing her husband Brad for the purchase of Music Of Epiphany CDs by the church.

Stewardship: Charley Cline reported that planning for the 2010 drive continues. Stewardship committee member Tim Harris will write a note in the Messenger alerting the congregation to the new drive.

Preschool: Beth Bolyard reported that preschool is on break. This summer, the preschool will be working on increasing fall enrollment. The preschool has updated its website and is hoping to develop better outdoor signage for the program although the latter involves compliance with Pickerington sign regulations. Representatives of the preschool will participate in the 4th of July parade and staff a booth at VBS.

Preschool staff and board members will be meeting next Thursday with Pastor Mark Nodo to discuss his findings and recommendations concerning organizational issues.

Evangelism: Carol Low reported that the Evangelism Committee is working on the 4th of July Ice Cream Social. An issue is cleaning the freezer out so that volunteers are able to pre-scoop ice cream. Committee members are also talking about including Music of Epiphany CDs in first time visitor packets.

Budget: Dave Zimmer reported that he and others are beginning to think about next year's budget.

Visioning Team: Don Maurer reported the committee which has renamed itself the "Wondering Committee" met the first of the month and developed one question future goals for consideration by the congregation. The committee will meet June 23d to discuss the process of submitting the question to the congregation.

Kitchen Committee: Mike Renner reported that the Kitchen Committee is now reduced to two people - his wife Polly and, by conscription, himself. An effort needs to be made to enlist additional people. Darcy Graves concurred note that kitchen clean and organization is a difficult problem which need attention.

Respectfully submitted

Rick Wuerth
Recording Secretary