

Tree of Life Council Minutes
May 13, 2019

Members Present: President Jack Zimmer, Treasurer Jim Voelz, Financial Secretary Heidi Beckham, Secretary Susie Rust, Linda Baumgartner, Annie Lindemann, Richard Schaper, Kevin Solberg, George Timmins, Pastor Chris Lake

Members Absent: Vice-President Larry Klotz, Kirk Helberg

Visitors: Madie Lake, Courtney Stoutes, Bunny Stoutes

A. The meeting was called to order by President Jack Zimmer at 6:36 pm and Pastor Chris Lake opened with prayer.

B. Consent agenda

I. **Motion:** Adoption of agenda

II. **Motion:** Approval of minutes (April 8, 2019) with spelling corrections

III. **Motion:** Ratify new members: Heather Riley

Pastor Chris Lake moved to accept the Consent Agenda. Richard Schaper seconded. All were in favor and the **motion passed**.

C. Discussion agenda

The Fusion High School Youth Group, represented by Courtney Stoutes and Madie Lake and accompanied by Youth Director Bunny Stoutes, would like TOL to begin conversation on intentional welcoming of LGBTQ+ persons into our faith community. This would be a church project, not just a youth project, but the youth would like to be an active part of the process. Our church is already fulfilling our mission statement of "inviting, inspiring, and including all people in Christ's love". We can extend our mission to those who need a safe place to worship and be in a faith community. We could begin to be more intentional in this area with an exploratory committee for further research and discussion. Reconciling in Christ (RIC) is a Lutheran organization which offers resources to lead congregations (not only Lutheran) through this process. Celebration Lutheran Church in Cypress (led by Ryan Dockery) and Zion Lutheran in Montrose are RIC churches. IF TOL becomes and RIC Church, financial cost is minimal, \$50 a year and a special RIC two-day training is \$100.

Discussion followed. Questions included: how does this impact the existing local church and continue to meet congregational perspectives and needs? Does this go beyond the 2012 ELCA statement of sexuality? The council agreed that this appears to consistent with our Mission and advances us to our Vision; and therefore, we should explore this further. Heidi Beckham moved that a task force be created; Richard Schaper seconded. All were in favor and the **motion passed**.

ACTION: A task force is formed to research and explore the RIC option and bring back findings and recommendations to the Council when completed. The Task

Force should complete this task in less than 18 months (hopefully much sooner). Heidi Beckham volunteered to be the Council representative and liaison for the task force that will be comprised of several members of the Youth Group. President Jack Zimmer expressed Council appreciation for a fine presentation from the Fusion Youth Group.

D. Financial reports

I.. Treasurer Jim Voelz presented a review of the monthly financial statements. This year to date we have borrowed about \$23,000 from Seeds (due to cash flow timing), repaid about \$10,000, with plans to repay the remaining \$13,000 as soon as possible. Expenses are in line, and income, (both pledged and non-pledged offerings), are running slightly ahead. George Timmins moved to accept the financial report; Kevin Solberg seconded the motion. All were in favor and the **motion passed**.

ACTION ITEM: regarding the increased mortgage rate, Pastor Chris Lake will call our mortgage company, Mission Investment Fund, directly to try to reduce the amount of the raise.

E. Pastoral report

I. Pastor Chris Lake gave updates on: Kurt Loftin, father of some of our young people in the Youth Group will be put on the liver transplant list; Shirley Wilkins is in a retirement home; Tommy Daniels is at Strake House. Larry Finke and John Soose are on the mend. Friday night (May 10) vandalism on TOL grounds included the angel in the cemetery being knocked down. Conroe Police Department was called and the angel has been put back in place. Pastor personally thanked the Council for leeway to allow the Flatbush Pictures film team to film during the second service on May 12. They are making a documentary on youth responding to school shootings. Pastor Chris felt it was a good opportunity to show the faith life of one of our HS youth, Madie Lake, who is the Texas State Liaison for the advocacy group March for Our Lives. Bishop Mike Rinehart, member of TOL, will be on the ballot during the Synod Assembly this week (Thursday-Saturday) to continue in his role as Bishop. We will send Megan and Amanda Dillon as our representatives plus Bunny Stoutes (Youth Director),

Our role as an Internship church is official and Carrie Petersen will officially begin this August. The Internship Lay Committee is being established, including Treasurer Jim Voelz and Secretary Susie Rust.

Pastor Chris Lake and Youth Director Bunny Stoutes are exploring tv advertising for 30-second ads on cable tv.

Staff input for the Employment Policy Manual has been completed and is ready for review. President Jack Zimmer will be able to meet with Staff as can be arranged.

F. Old Business

I. Memorial Walk/Prayer Path

Progress continues> Larry K was not present to provide any details.

II. The Exploratory Committee for a potential TOL Endowment Fund

Committee members, George Timmins, Ted Dinklage, Pastor Chris Lake, Treasurer Jim Voelz met with Dr. Lizbeth Johnson from the Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest (LFS). The Committee recommends that we begin an Endowment Fund account with \$60,000 (from SEEDS reserves), yielding 4% interest, which is more than we currently earn through our bank accounts. This money would be available when we need it, although is not used as a checking account. Our quarterly earnings can be re-invested into the account. We would handle the finances internally, similar to a dedicated account. George Timmins moved that the council approved moving \$60,000 of TOL funds into an LFS Endowment Fund. Kevin Solberg seconded; all were in favor and the **motion passed**.

ACTION: Plans include signing the official papers, perhaps at the next council meeting, and announcing this move at the August Congregational meeting. The committee has arranged for Dr. Lizbeth Johnson to give a Sunday Temple Talk on October 6, 2019, as part of our Stewardship Program.

G. New Business.

I. Financial Benefits for members 70 years old.

Treasurer Jim Voelz would like to write a personal letter regarding handling IRA monies for most financial benefit. Financial Secretary Heidi Beckham reminded us of stock option liquidations. President Jack Zimmer suggested perhaps a financial planning seminar might be useful.

ACTION: Jim will develop the letter as a starting point.

II Future Leaders

President Jack Zimmer, George Timmins, Linda Baumgartner and Deb Zimmer hosted a get-together on Saturday, May 11, at Linda's house, inviting those people identified as future leaders in TOL. Those attending were David and Kris France, John Soose, Julie Timmins, Dan Christenson, David and Linda Fischer, Jim and Lisa Lemaux, Brent Kovar, and Karen Solberg. Jack and George led discussions inviting opinions and questions. Attendees appreciated being identified as potential leaders. They were urged to find the areas of participation they were passionate about and begin investigating the behind-the-scene activities in these areas. Information sheets about teams and council liaisons were distributed. Discussion included positive feedback about TOL Lenten services in the park with the hope that we do more of those. The group would like to be included in receiving Council minutes.

ACTION ITEM: The Future Leaders list will be included in the Council Minutes mailout. Council will be intentional about inviting them to future Council meetings.

II. WELCA update

Annie Lindemann reported a meeting of the Women of ELCA (WELCA) held at the Schapers' house. A second meeting focused on working with the Montgomery County Women's Crisis Center with Vicki Rogers (Social Ministry Outreach Team Leader) as liaison. An ice cream social is planned in June and another meeting in September.

H. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm and closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Susie Rust, Secretary

NOTES: Congregational January 2019 Meeting: Susie Rust confirmed as Secretary (replacing Linda Baumgartner); Congregational Meeting 2018: Jack Zimmer. President 2 yr. term, Jim Voelz(Treasurer), Linda Baumgartner(Secretary), Kirk Helberg, George Timmins, Heidi Beckham (Financial Secretary); elected for 3 yr. terms: Susie Rust, Annie Lindemann, Richard Schaper, Kevin Solberg, Larry Klotz (VP). Congreg.Mtg 2017: Jim Voelz (Trea), Linda Baumgartner (Sec.), Kirk Helberg, George Timmins, Jack Zimmer (3Yr. terms), Dennis McConnell President (term expires in 2017). 2016 Congreg. Mtg.: Susan Blough (Sec.) Elected 2015 - Heidi Beckham, Matt Hannes (2nd term), Chuck Will, Lawrence Zuelke, Elected 2014 - Linda Baumgartner, Alicia Macha (resigned position January, 2015), Jim Voelz. (2nd term), John Nye. (2nd term), Julie Weeks. (2nd term)