



## SERVANT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes September 20, 2023

1. The regular meeting of the VRUMC Servant Leadership Council (SLC) was convened on Wednesday, September 20, 2023 at 7:00 PM via Zoom, with all members present, except for Javier Saenz and Bernadette Ealy.
2. The Lay Leader led a spiritual and leadership development discussion based on the scripture passage Mark 8:34-37, which highlights Jesus' instructions to those that would follow Him. The key point is that while we tend to live in schedule-centered lives, we should take the focus off ourselves and shift them to where it really belongs. The truth is that our lives belong to God. Our true focus should not be on the success of the organization, but on God and all His Glory. Hillarye led the group in prayer.
3. Pastor's Report
  - a. The Lead Pastor made known the recent uptick in gossip that was based completely on false information. First, the Pastor has never attended a conference on transgender rights and no church resources have been appropriated to do so, either in the past or future. Secondly, the Pastor was not responsible for bringing the issue of the Pride flag to the SLC, and her stole and the altar lighting are not part of a plan to affirm a set of beliefs. There will be no public proclamations about these falsehoods, but it is incumbent on the SLC members to debunk these rumors when faced with them.
  - b. The Lead Pastor stated her excitement about this season of ministry at the church. The possibility of new members and conversations with new worship leader Andy Harrison about building the worship experience are key elements of the positive feeling.
  - c. The Worship Team is looking to make several improvements soon. The main elements are replacing the electronic drum kit with a traditional kit (including a plexiglass buffer), acquiring a refurbished organ, and recreating the church choir. Estimated cost of these items is \$10,000 and will be covered by either special gifts and/or the Pastor's Discretionary Funds.

#### 4. Discussion Items

##### Recent Church Family Meeting Feedback

- a. Sunday Schedule Changes – The consensus, both during and after the meeting, was positive. It was acknowledged that some anxiety still exists among the 8:30 attendees and work needs to continue to assuage those concerns. It was decided that the next Church Family Meeting will be on Sunday, November 5, between the two worship services. This will allow for greater participation from the 8:30 congregation and allow feedback from the combined October 29 service.
- b. Public Displays on Church Property – The SLC continued the conversation about the appropriateness of certain symbols on the church grounds, including the cross, the U.S. Flag, and “cause” displays. Many opinions were offered on divisiveness, messaging, and potential consequences. In the end, it was decided to continue the conversation concerning the “cause” symbology but a compromise was tentatively reached on the American flag. The Chair will write specific guidance to include the two appropriate holidays (Independence Day and Veterans Day), scope of the display, and inclusion of the electronic sign in the messaging. This proposal will be reviewed and ultimately voted on by the SLC in the next few weeks.
- c. Survey Results – The Lay Leader shared the results of the most recent survey taken at the church. The Touchpoint Survey attempts to glean sentiment instead of hard data, creating the opportunity for each respondent to consider what is important to them when it comes to attending VRUMC. Work will continue to discern if there are actionable items within the framework of the responses.
- d. Reconciling Ministry Work Team – Hillarye and James have recruited a team for this project and will be meeting sometime in the latter half of October. More information will be forthcoming.
- e. Discussion Topics from SLC – None.

#### 5. Consent Package

- a. Financials – The current financial picture of the church is less than desirable. While giving continues to exceed budgeted numbers, they are outweighed by expenses. The overage of expenses is mainly due to underbudgeting Wages and Benefits of the staff, and the prepayment of our new insurance contract. The elimination of the Director of Family Ministry’s wage expense for the remainder of 2023, and the gap of insurance payments closing, will help some of the shortfall, but it is expected at this time that the church will end the year in the red. No actions are proposed at this point, but as we enter budget season, it will be important to create a budget for 2024 that has a better chance of success. Discussions with alternative accounting possibilities are on-going and more information will be coming soon.
- b. Church Emergency Master Plan – The SLC was provided a copy of the VRUMC Master Emergency Plan for review. The plan was accepted with no offered alterations. The SLC Chair has been in contact with a Security Consulting firm but is tabling the discussion until it is determined whether the cost is manageable.

**6. SPRC (Closed Session)**

- a. The SPRC Chair discussed the plan for the remainder of this year regarding filling the vacant Family Ministry position. The Lead Pastor has formulated an action plan for the Youth, and is being aided by several volunteers for specific tasks. The one glaring need is for a teacher for the group. Christina Dixon has agreed to increase her help with the Children's Ministry, at a small increase in remuneration. We will be having discussions on the long-term plan for these ministries soon.
- b. The SPRC Chair indicated the need for volunteers to step up and aid in tasks that may be leading to staff time and energy level taxation.

Next SLC Meeting – **Wednesday, October 25, at 7:00 PM (via Zoom)**

**Future Dates: All Church Family Meeting on Sunday, November 5, after the 8:30 a.m. worship service**

Closing Prayer – James Kunke

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Submitted:

Stephen Greenwade, Chair

Ashley Anne Sipe, Lead Pastor

Angie Christoffersen, Lay Member Annual Conf

James Kunke, Lay Leader

Hillarye Hightower, Staff Parish Relations Chair

Karen Meeks

Javier Saenz, Chair of Trustees

Susan Francis

Dan Sepdham

Tiffany Harlow

Bernadette Ealy